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MOON SHOT

This month marks the 40th anniversary of the Apollo 14 mission, commanded by Alan Shepard, the first American in space and the fifth man to walk on the moon. There, he famously used a lunar sample scoop handle, with a 6-iron head attached, to hit a golf ball. A Navy veteran, he belonged to American Legion Post 9 in Derry, N.H.

NASA/Edgar D. Mitchell

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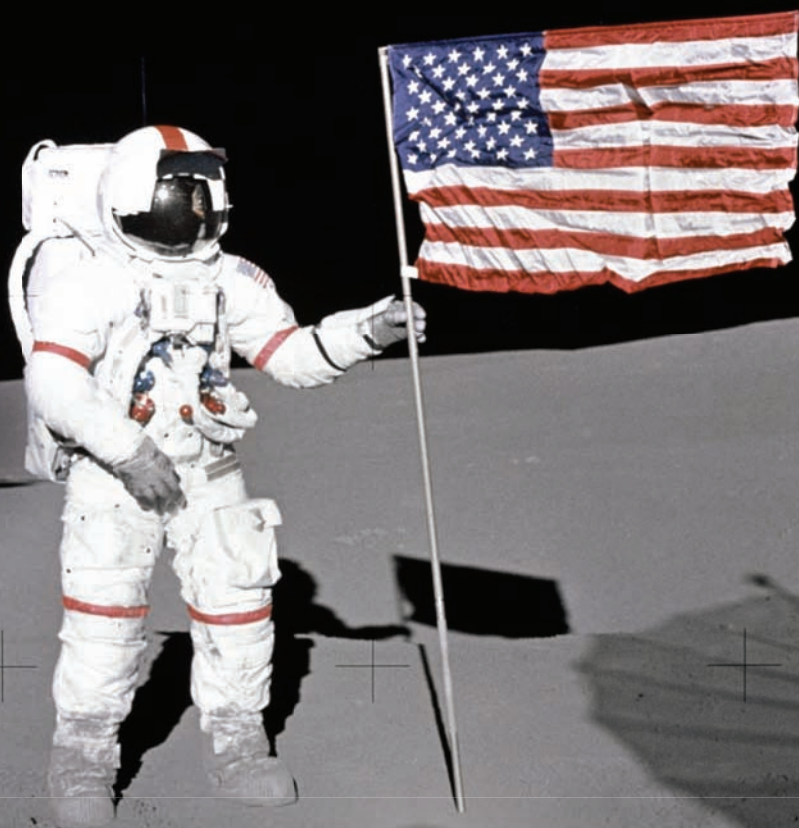
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The American Legion Magazine, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its 2.5 million members. These wartime veterans, working through 14,000 community-level posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youth.

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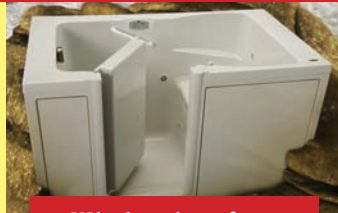
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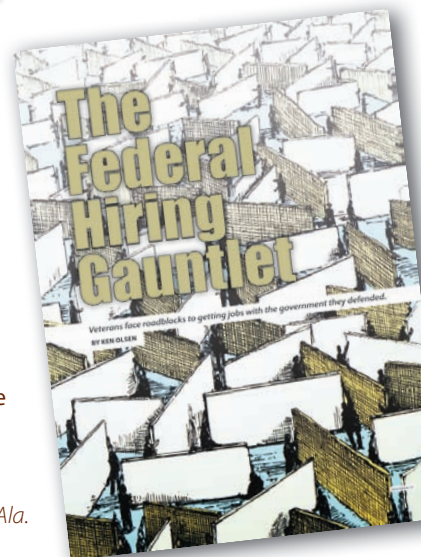
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'The Federal Hiring Gauntlet'

Thank you for the informative article by Ken Olsen (December). I am somewhat relieved to discover that I am not the only veteran frustrated in seeking federal employment. I left active duty in 2006 after 13 years (including a tour of duty in Iraq), and went to work as an information analyst for a contractor at the Department of Defense. In late 2009, DoD began to hire many contractors over to federal employment. None of them are veterans. I once heard a government co-worker in an adjoining cubicle explaining to another the process that one supervisor used to get around the veterans-preference criteria and hire his friends instead. Veterans preference in the federal-hiring process is a sad joke.

— Jerry Thomas, Gadsden, Ala.



I served in the Army National Guard from 2007 to 2010, and was deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2008. I truly thought there was something wrong with me when I couldn't find a job. Since coming home, I have been on unemployment once and am about to go on it a second time. I have a master's degree, many skills and two certificates from the Army. I am also bilingual. I cannot believe that I don't even qualify for a job at the local car-rental company. I have tried to apply for jobs on USAJobs.gov. It takes one full work day to apply on that site, and then you don't even know if you've done it properly.

As much as I try to put the thought out of my head, I find myself asking, "This is what I gave to my country for?"

— Viviana Molina, Myrtle Beach, S.C.

I am a Vietnam War veteran who was laid off 14 months ago. I tried using USAJobs.gov to find work. The site is a nightmare that requires information, such as age, that allows for discrimination.

After filling out eight pages of detailed information on my 20-plus years in aviation for a job with the FAA, I received a notice that it couldn't hire me because I wasn't an employee of the FAA. I wasted 12 hours of my job-search time pursuing a nonexistent job.

There is little wonder at the low public perception of federal employees when the people who get hired by the government are the best at navigating the website and getting the job, rather than doing the job.

— Greg Scher, Cabot, Ark.

I have bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, and I served as a combat officer in the Army. I have been a counselor, among other things, and supervised large numbers of people. Yet when I applied to VA, I didn't even receive an acknowledgement.

I have applied for other positions with various government agencies and received no response. And though well-grounded in the use of computers, I found USAJobs.gov obtuse and confusing.

At the state level, the employment security commissions have been of little assistance, and the veterans representatives are typically not veterans. The same goes for veterans representatives at the various educational institutions with which I have been associated.

The government's record in honoring veterans by acting upon the words they expound – "hire a vet" – is disappointing. And with so many elected and appointed officials themselves nonveterans, I do not foresee any change in the situation.

– Oscar Patterson III,
Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.

The one item Ken Olsen neglected to talk about is the so-called union of federal workers. Whenever a job comes up in the VA system, these workers have first crack at it before it is advertised to others, like veterans. Veterans may apply for any job, but if a qualified federal employee also applies, he or she has the first crack. Only if the job is not filled this way is it opened up to others. It is a fallacy that vets have any preference in the VA system.

– Thomas J. Jurek, Cheyenne, Wyo.

I am a disabled Vietnam War veteran. I retired from a VA medical center last January. I can tell you firsthand that veteran employees are becoming scarce in that hospital. Why would VA discriminate against the very people it's supposed to be serving?

– Thomas Rush, Topeka, Kan.

'Flight of the Superbug'

Thank you for your article on MRSA (December). As a nurse, I get questions all the time about this problem. A lot of people carry the bacteria in their noses, without symptoms. Handwashing is key. Wash your hands after blowing your nose, and do not cover your mouth with your hand when you cough or sneeze. Cover it with your arm or cough into your shoulder. Also, our moms were right when they told us not to pick our noses. Even the healthiest may harbor MRSA.

– Trish Williams, Litchfield Park, Ariz.

I can relate to the article on the superbug *Staphylococcus*. On June 3, 2009, I had a cataract removed from my right eye. On June 6, my eye started swelling. Three operations later, I lost all vision in my right eye. I wrote to my congressman and state senator, and more or less was told to get a lawyer. More steps should be taken during hospital stays. Everyone should have a staph test.

– Gerald F. Carey, Milo, Maine

'Going, going, gone?'

The report of U.S. Navy ships decreasing from 466 in 1992 to 285 in 2010 (Rapid Fire, December) is extremely disturbing when the Chinese are actively upgrading and increasing their number of naval ships. Few Americans are truly aware of this fact relative to the protection of this country, which remains at risk across its various borders. We are no longer protected by the two oceans.

– Roger L. Kehrier, Plymouth, Mich.

The graphic depicting a dwindling naval force pessimistically implies that U.S. Navy ships will phase to zero. I am more optimistic, and see Navy ships becoming more efficient – accomplishing more and more with less and less to deter and conquer disturbers of peace.

To back my claim, another Rapid Fire piece ("HULC, Mosquito, Shredder – A Look at Tomorrow's Troop Technology") describes an exoskeleton that can allow soldiers to "carry as much as 200 pounds of gear over rough terrain." That's American ingenuity for you.

– Joseph Hicswa, Passaic, N.J.

No to wind turbines

I understand the concern of Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D.-Fla., for the environment in her home state (Big Issues, November), but I do not agree with all of her solutions, specifically that of wind turbines.

Here in Maine, many of us are sickened by the horrific damage to our mountains that is just beginning. There are plans to destroy thousands of acres of land, kill off wildlife species and their habitats, and conduct blasting that will impact our cold-water fisheries and aquifers.

Maine residents do not even get the benefit of any wind-turbine-produced energy, as we currently produce more hydro energy than we need. It will be sold to Canada and states to the south of us. The only ones benefiting financially from this are the current and past politicians involved.

– David Miller, Lexington Township, Maine

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A couple of words worth sharing

Traditionally, this space is reserved for American Legion national commanders to sound off on global issues, or to raise awareness of important programs that advance the organization's mission. I have something a little different in mind this month, but it's equally significant.

My message is this: remember the value of saying thanks.

In volunteer organizations like The American Legion, that's often the only compensation for a job well done. To those currently serving our country in uniform, a little bit of unsolicited gratitude can go a long way toward easing the often lonely tension of wartime service far from home. As for us older veterans, I recently learned that a company interested in learning what makes Legionnaires tick found that it wasn't money or fame, but gratitude and remembrance. This makes a lot of sense to me. I see it everywhere, and I know my fellow Legionnaires do, too.

We see it in the way the same post historian carefully assembles a scrapbook of photos, news clips and event programs year after year a half-century after fighting at the frozen Chosin Reservoir. We see it at the front desk of the VA medical center, where the same clutch of Legionnaires and Auxiliary members can always be found helping patients and families get where they need to go. When U.S. flags magically appear for patriotic holidays along your town's main street, chances are that some unassuming veteran with a good pickup truck made it happen, wanting nothing in return other than the satisfaction of having done something that needed doing.

When I was elected to lead this great organization, I stood before our national-convention delegates and thanked them. Then I directed them to go back to their hometowns across the land and express gratitude to those who make a difference in their communities. Mark Twain wrote that "kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see." An unknown author wrote that "the two most important words are 'thank you.' The one most important word: 'we.' The least important word: 'I.'"

With that in mind, please think about that special person in your community. It might be a veteran or a member of the National Guard who's never complained about the number of deployments that led to missed birthdays or anniversaries. It might be a family member who weathers the stress of a loved one at war or struggles to find a job in this difficult economy. It might be the teacher who always does a great job preparing students to compete in The American Legion Oratorical Contest, or the local newspaper reporter who never forgets to publish stories about it. It's certainly that young man or woman in a military uniform pacing nervously at the airport or train station, in transit from one training installation to another, or from a training installation to a combat outpost.

Please walk up to them and thank them. Remember to drop them a card from time to time. Let them know that when good people humbly sacrifice their time and energy – or even risk their lives – for the benefit of others, we have a couple of words we'd like to share.




National Commander
Jimmie L. Foster

MEMORANDA

FILL OUT THE ROAR SURVEY:

As part of the Legion's Regional Office Action Review (ROAR) program – in which Legion officials and local veterans meet with VA Regional Office administrators and employees to see what progress is being made to reduce the VA claims backlog – a confidential survey is available online for members to share problems, and successes, they have encountered with their regional offices. We need your input. www.legion.org/roar

CITIZENS FLAG ALLIANCE ONLINE:

A revamped Citizens Flag Alliance website, cfa-inc.org, is now online. The new CFA site features breaking news regarding the U.S. flag, a Frequently Asked Questions section about the CFA and the proposed flag amendment, a chronology of events since the U.S. Supreme Court struck down flag-protection laws in 1989, and a history of congressional testimony advocating a flag amendment.

The new CFA site also allows visitors to either donate to the CFA, or reach out to members of Congress to urge their support for a flag amendment. They'll also find step-by-step instructions for writing letters to Congress, or editorials or letters to the editor in their local newspapers.

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Federal support for ethanol



SUPPORT

Rep. John Shimkus, R-Ill.

■ Shimkus serves on the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

Ethanol is an important part of our nation's energy security.

If we think about electricity production, the United States is virtually independent. We produce nearly 100 percent of electricity within our own borders.

With regard to our liquid fuels, however, we are not independent, importing 60 percent of our oil. Not only do we import crude oil, we now import refined petroleum products. Our largest sources are Canada and Mexico. We could become energy-independent if we focus on North American resources.

We import large amounts of oil from nations that hate our democracy yet love our dollars, such as Venezuela. Saudi Arabia and Nigeria round out the top five nations from which we import oil. The American people want us to decrease our reliance on imported crude oil, especially from countries that are our enemies or that don't appreciate or support our democracy.

Ethanol is just one of the ways that we can increase our production of fuel right here in the United States. Corn and other ethanol-fuel stocks are renewable. Plus, we don't need to transport them around the globe. Beneficiaries are farmers, ethanol-plant employees, and local government bodies that receive real-estate taxes – not foreign governments.

Many complain about the tax incentives given to ethanol, yet these same people remain silent over the tax incentives given to the oil and gas industries. Ethanol neither takes food away from the food supply, nor takes more energy to produce than it contributes.

In 2007, 2.3 billion bushels of corn produced 6.5 billion gallons of ethanol. That is a made-in-America fuel I am proud to use.



OPPOSE

Rep. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz.

■ Flake serves on the House Committee on Natural Resources.

With the pending expiration of federal incentives for ethanol, a discussion of federal assistance to the corn-ethanol industry is long overdue. The federal government began assisting the corn-ethanol industry several decades ago in

order to lessen our dependence on foreign oil and to reduce greenhouse gases. Corn ethanol has not achieved either goal, tens of billions of dollars have been

wasted, and the policy has been fraught with unintended consequences.

The corn-ethanol industry benefits from a tax credit worth 45 cents for every gallon blended with gasoline, which cost U.S. taxpayers more than \$5 billion in 2009 alone. In addition, the ethanol industry has benefited from protection from competition in the form of prohibitive tariffs on imports. Both the tax credit and the import tariff were set to expire at the end of 2010.

The billions of dollars wasted on the industry is reason enough to let the ethanol tax credit expire and begin to let the industry stand on its own, but the money wasted is only the tip of the iceberg. For example, corn-ethanol subsidies have inflated the price of corn and rippled through other industries dependent on corn, such as pork producers.

What's worse is that federal support for ethanol has made it more difficult for other forms of alternative energy to be developed. It ought to be the marketplace, not the federal government, that decides what alternative-energy industry is in the best position to meet our country's energy needs.

Our federal corn-ethanol policy has been a bad deal for taxpayers and consumers, and letting the incentives expire would be a good first step in correcting this boondoggle.

THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

Supporters say ethanol fuel deserves federal assistance.

Critics say the subsidies are too costly.

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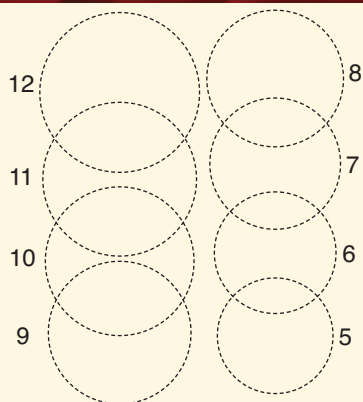
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HEALTHY HABITS CAN WARD OFF STROKE

Nearly 800,000 Americans experience a stroke each year. Stroke is the fourth-leading cause of death in the United States. Only heart disease and cancer take more lives. But there's some good news. The death rate from stroke fell by more than 30 percent between 1996 and 2006. That's mostly due to better prevention efforts, according to the American Heart Association.

In its new guidelines based on the latest research, the group says the risk of stroke can be cut by 80 percent by taking these healthy steps:



Don't smoke. It's also a good idea to avoid breathing secondhand smoke.

Eat a balanced diet. Try to eat at least five servings of vegetables and fruits daily.

Limit alcohol to no more than two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women.



Get up and get going.

Get at least 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity every day.



Stay fit. Maintain a healthy body weight.

Chocolate and your heart

BY DR. JOEL KUPERSMITH

The news couldn't be sweeter for chocoholics in recent months. Several large studies have found cardiac benefits to eating chocolate.

But there are caveats: dark chocolate, with its higher cocoa content, is more healthful than milk chocolate. And light to moderate consumption is best.

The American Heart Association is not quite ready to deem chocolate a "heart-healthy" food.

Research has by no means shown a cause-and-effect link between chocolate and cardiac health. And experts still have concerns about the calories and sugar in the lower-quality chocolate that Americans often eat. But studies do offer interesting food for thought.



A group with VA, Brigham and Women's Hospital, and Harvard Medical School looked at dietary factors and coronary

heart disease among nearly 5,000 adults. Those who reported eating chocolate five times or more per week were about half as likely to have heart disease as those who didn't partake at all.

In a Harvard-led study of nearly 32,000 Swedish women, those who ate an average of one to two servings of high-quality chocolate per week had a 32-percent-lower risk of heart failure. For those who reported eating chocolate every day, there was no such protective effect.

An Australian study of more than 1,200 older women found that those who ate chocolate at least once a week vs. those who consumed less were 35 percent less likely to die from coronary heart disease, and 60 percent less likely to die from heart failure, over the 10-year study.

Chocolate, especially the cocoa-rich dark variety, has natural antioxidants called flavonoids. These compounds may help explain chocolate's apparent health benefits. Other studies have suggested that chocolate may also help lower blood pressure, prevent excess blood-clotting and curb inflammation.

Dr. Joel Kupersmith is chief research and development officer for the Veterans Health Administration.

Living Well is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it, medical advice. Readers should consult their physicians when they have health problems.

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*Artist depiction of diabetic nerve pain symptoms



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Start the Lyrice conversation with your doctor today.

Prescription Lyrice is not for everyone. Tell your doctor right away about any serious allergic reaction that causes swelling of the face, mouth, lips, gums, tongue, throat or neck or any trouble breathing or that affects your skin. Lyrice may cause suicidal thoughts or actions in a very small number of people. Call your doctor right away if you have new or worsening depression, suicidal thoughts or actions, or unusual changes in mood or behavior. Lyrice may cause swelling of your hands, legs and feet. Some of the most common side effects of Lyrice are dizziness and sleepiness. Do not drive or work with machines until you know how Lyrice affects you. Other common side effects are blurry vision, weight gain, trouble concentrating, dry mouth, and feeling "high." Also, tell your doctor right away about muscle pain along with feeling sick and feverish, or any changes in your eyesight including blurry vision or any skin sores if you have diabetes. You may have a higher chance of swelling, hives or gaining weight if you are also taking certain diabetes or high blood pressure medicines. Do not drink alcohol while taking Lyrice. You may have more dizziness and sleepiness if you take Lyrice with alcohol, narcotic pain medicines, or medicines for anxiety. If you have had a drug or alcohol problem, you may be more likely to misuse Lyrice. Tell your doctor if you are planning to father a child. Talk with your doctor before you stop taking Lyrice or any other prescription medication.

Please see Important Facts Brief Summary on adjacent page.

To learn more visit www.lyrica.com or call toll-free 1-888-9-LYRICA (1-888-959-7422).

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.FDA.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

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IMPORTANT FACTS



(LEER-i-kah)

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION ABOUT LYRICA

LYRICA may cause serious, even life threatening, allergic reactions. Stop taking LYRICA and call your doctor right away if you have any signs of a serious allergic reaction:

- Swelling of your face, mouth, lips, gums, tongue, throat or neck
- Have any trouble breathing
- Rash, hives (raised bumps) or blisters

Like other antiepileptic drugs, LYRICA may cause suicidal thoughts or actions in a very small number of people, about 1 in 500.

Call your doctor right away if you have any symptoms, especially if they are new, worse or worry you, including:

- New or worsening depression
- Suicidal thoughts or actions
- Unusual changes in mood or behavior

Do not stop LYRICA without first talking with your doctor.

LYRICA may cause swelling of your hands, legs and feet.

This swelling can be a serious problem with people with heart problems.

LYRICA may cause dizziness or sleepiness.

Do not drive a car, work with machines, or do other dangerous things until you know how LYRICA affects you. Ask your doctor when it is okay to do these things.

ABOUT LYRICA

LYRICA is a prescription medicine used in adults 18 years and older to treat:

- Pain from damaged nerves that happens with diabetes or that follows healing of shingles
- Partial seizures when taken together with other seizure medicines
- Fibromyalgia (pain all over your body)

Who should NOT take LYRICA:

- Anyone who is allergic to anything in LYRICA

BEFORE STARTING LYRICA

Tell your doctor about all your medical conditions, including if you:

- Have had depression, mood problems or suicidal thoughts or behavior
- Have or had kidney problems or dialysis
- Have heart problems, including heart failure
- Have a bleeding problem or a low blood platelet count
- Have abused prescription medicines, street drugs or alcohol in the past
- Have ever had swelling of your face, mouth, tongue, lips, gums, neck, or throat (angioedema)
- Plan to father a child. It is not known if problems seen in animal studies can happen in humans.
- Are pregnant, plan to become pregnant or are breastfeeding. It is not known if LYRICA will harm your unborn baby. You and your doctor should decide whether you should take LYRICA or breast-feed, but not both.

Tell your doctor about all your medicines. Include over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

LYRICA and other medicines may affect each other causing side effects. Especially tell your doctor if you take:

- Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors. You may have a higher chance for swelling and hives.

BEFORE STARTING LYRICA, continued

- Avandia® (rosiglitazone)*, Avandamet® (rosiglitazone and metformin)* or Actos® (pioglitazone)** for diabetes. You may have a higher chance of weight gain or swelling of your hands or feet.
- Narcotic pain medicines (such as oxycodone), tranquilizers or medicines for anxiety (such as lorazepam). You may have a higher chance for dizziness and sleepiness.
- Any medicines that make you sleepy

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF LYRICA

LYRICA may cause serious side effects, including:

- See “Important Safety Information About LYRICA.”
- Muscle problems, pain, soreness or weakness along with feeling sick and fever
- Eyesight problems including blurry vision
- Weight gain. Weight gain may affect control of diabetes and can be serious for people with heart problems.
- Feeling “high”

If you have any of these symptoms, tell your doctor right away.

The most common side effects of LYRICA are:

- Dizziness
- Blurry vision
- Weight gain
- Sleepiness
- Trouble concentrating
- Swelling of hands and feet
- Dry mouth

If you have diabetes, you should pay extra attention to your skin while taking LYRICA and tell your doctor of any sores or skin problems.

HOW TO TAKE LYRICA

Do:

- Take LYRICA exactly as your doctor tells you. Your doctor will tell you how much to take and when to take it. Take LYRICA at the same times each day.
- Take LYRICA with or without food.

Don't:

- Drive a car or use machines if you feel dizzy or sleepy while taking LYRICA.
- Drink alcohol or use other medicines that make you sleepy while taking LYRICA.
- Change the dose or stop LYRICA suddenly. You may have headaches, nausea, diarrhea, or trouble sleeping if you stop taking LYRICA suddenly.
- Start any new medicines without first talking to your doctor.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist. This is only a brief summary of important information.
- Go to www.lyrica.com or call 1-866-459-7422 (1-866-4LYRICA).

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Chemical exposures linked to thyroid disease

BY JUDITH HURLEY

More and more, evidence suggests that pesticides and other synthetic chemicals in the environment are bad news for the thyroid gland, especially in women. The butterfly-shaped gland rests at the base of the throat. By secreting the hormone thyroxine from its two lobes, the gland tells all the body's cells and organs how fast or slow to work.

Sometimes, however, the thyroid goes haywire. An estimated 27 million Americans have thyroid disease, which can manifest as a sluggish, underactive gland (hypothyroidism), an overactive gland (hyperthyroidism), or as thyroid nodules, which may swell, cause discomfort, and drive levels of thyroid hormone too high.

Although genes have more to do with a person's chance of developing thyroid disease than anything else, the increased risk from chemicals is getting attention in medical circles. But while a wide range of synthetic compounds are now believed to disrupt the function of the thyroid hormone, studies in humans are sparse.

A study of Danish greenhouse workers who worked with 60 different pesticides found harmful changes in their thyroid function. Scientists at the University of Nebraska Medical Center reported in the *American Journal of*

Epidemiology last year that women whose spouses had worked with pesticides were significantly more likely to have hypothyroidism. In some cases, exposure to the pesticides was linked to a doubling or tripling of thyroid-disease risk.

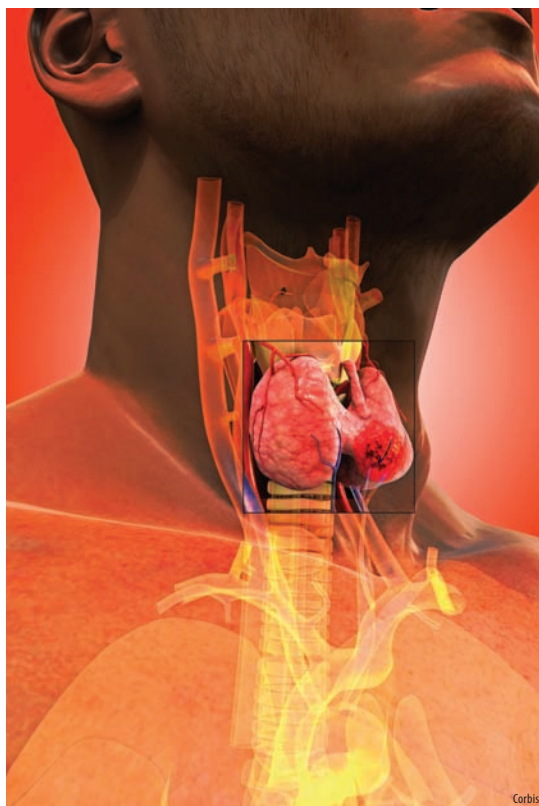
Other compounds also appear to cause problems. Perfluoroalkyl acids (PFAAs) are a family of widely used chemicals found in many industrial and consumer products. Nearly everyone has some PFAAs in their blood, where these compounds linger for several years after exposure. Using blood samples from nearly 4,000 adults, British researchers found that the higher the blood concentration of PFAAs, the greater the likelihood of thyroid disease. Other studies have found that bisphenol A (BPA), a chemical in polycarbonate plastics (found in some water bottles, food containers and canned goods), disrupts the normal activity of thyroid hormone in animals, although the effects in humans need further study. Perchlorates (chemicals used in rocket fuel and fireworks) and thiocyanate compounds in cigarettes have also been implicated.

Judith Hurley is a freelance writer specializing in medicine and health.

SYMPTOMS

An underactive thyroid gland is the most common type of thyroid disease, affecting 17 percent of women and

9 percent of men by 60. Symptoms include fatigue, forgetfulness, weight gain, depression, mood swings, coarse hair and dry skin. Symptoms of an overactive thyroid include sweating, weight loss, changes in appetite or vision, frequent bowel movements, tremor, sleep disturbances and intolerance of heat. Thyroid nodules may or may not be noticeable, but any small swelling or lump in the throat or neck should be checked by a doctor.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Completely avoiding the synthetic chemicals linked to thyroid disease isn't easy, but it makes sense to avoid exposure to pesticides, plastics that contain bisphenol A (BPA), cigarette smoke, and fumes from paint and new carpeting when possible. The American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists states that women, people with diabetes, and older people have a higher risk for thyroid disease. A simple blood test can determine whether a person's thyroid gland is working normally.

A little extra weight nothing to ignore

If you've gotten complacent about those few extra pounds hugging your waist, take note. One of the largest studies to date found that being even a little overweight shortened the life spans of subjects. Sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, the study of nearly 1.5 million people involved researchers at a dozen institutions around the world. They reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that women who were overweight had a 13-percent-increased likelihood of dying during the study's five- to 28-year follow-up period. Findings were similar for men.

It has long been known that obesity is linked to death from heart disease, stroke and some cancers, but previous studies evaluating mortality in overweight individuals have been inconclusive. Two-thirds of U.S. adults are now overweight or obese.

LOVE HANDLES BY THE NUMBERS

Body mass index (BMI) is a measure of body fat in adults based on height and weight.

Calculate your BMI online:

 www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/bmicalc.htm

BMI rankings

Below 18.5	Underweight
18.5 to 24.9	Normal weight
25.0 to 29.9	Overweight
30.0 or above	Obese



FIGHTING CATARACTS

As people live longer, eye doctors expect to see more cataracts, a vision-impairing condition in which the lens of the eye becomes thicker, less flexible and clouded. According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, 70 percent of people develop cataracts by 75. The National Eye Institute recommends these steps to prevent them:

- Wear sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat to protect eyes from UV damage.
- Don't smoke.
- Eat antioxidant-rich green leafy vegetables.
- Get a comprehensive eye exam every two years if you're 60 or older.

Surprisingly, some cholesterol-lowering drugs may help, too. A large study at Tel Aviv University found that taking a statin drug cut cataract risk by 38 percent in men and 18 percent in women, thanks to the medication's anti-inflammatory properties.



THE WORLD'S TOP HOSPITALS

The *U.S. News & World Report* Hospital Honor Roll for 2010-2011 spotlights some of the very best hospitals in the world. Requirements to make the Honor Roll are so stringent that "99.7 percent of all centers in the nation were excluded," according to the magazine.

The rankings are based on a number of factors, including operating rooms that perform cutting-edge procedures, patient safety, death rates, patient care and services, peer reputation, referrals for patients in serious condition, and unusual capabilities and specialties.

- 1 **Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore**
- 2 **Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn.**
- 3 **Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston**
- 4 **Cleveland Clinic**
- 5 **Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, Los Angeles**
- 6 **New York-Presbyterian University Hospital of Columbia and Cornell**
- 7 **University of California, San Francisco Medical Center**
- 8 **Barnes-Jewish Hospital/ Washington University, St. Louis**
- 9 **Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia**
- 10 **Duke University Medical Center, Durham, N.C.**

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Debt panels target military retirees

BY TOM PHILPOTT

Two separate blue-ribbon panels created to find ways to curb the federal government's enormous and rising debt have targeted TRICARE beneficiaries for higher fees and future military retirees for smaller annuities.

The same panels propose no specific cuts to VA benefits or services. However, they do recommend replacing the current index for calculating annual cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to dampen growth in entitlements, including veterans disability compensation, federal retirement and Social Security.

The National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, co-chaired by former Republican Sen. Alan Simpson and Erskine Bowles, chief of staff to President Clinton, released its final report in December. It proposes dramatic cuts across government, including Social Security and Medicare for current workers and even to defense programs. It also calls for a variety of higher taxes and an end to some prized tax deductions.

Military retirees 65 and older who use TRICARE For Life (TFL) as a kind of golden insurance supplement to Medicare would face higher out-of-pocket costs.

To encourage the elderly to use health care more efficiently, the commission says TFL and other Medigap plans should be barred from covering the first \$500 of costs not paid by Medicare and should cover only half of the next \$5,000. So TFL users and other elderly Americans using Medicare could pay up to \$3,000 more annually. This idea is projected to save \$4 billion for Medicare and TRICARE through 2015.

The Simpson-Bowles panel wants a task force created to re-evaluate federal retirement plans, which it says are out of line with private-sector pensions. The goal is to cut \$70 billion over 10 years. The commission also says a separate process should be set up to control federal health-care spending, including by TRICARE beneficiaries.

In November, the Debt Reduction Task Force, co-chaired by former Republican Sen. Pete Domenici and economist Alice Rivlin, brought out another package of federal cost-cutting recommendations. It calls for a freeze on total domestic discretionary spending, which would almost certainly dampen new initiatives to help veterans, and curb growth in the VA budget.

The Domenici-Rivlin plan also recommends cutting military retirement for servicemembers, including those fighting overseas, who haven't served more than 15 years. More would qualify for some retirement annuities, but at 60, if they serve at least 10 years. Completion of the traditional 20-year career would no longer trigger an immediate annuity. Instead, retired pay would begin at 57.

Though not recommending specific cuts to VA health care, the report says the cost has climbed 71 percent in the past five years. This

"must be slowed, or other domestic programs will have to be cut."

One proposal found in both reports is a change to the method of setting COLAs for Social Security, federal retirement benefits, veterans compensation and more. Critics say federal entitlements should be adjusted annually, using a consumer price index that more closely tracks how consumers actually spend their dollars and, on average, would hold down adjustments to federal entitlements by about a quarter-percent point per year. Opponents say a chained-index CPI unfairly takes advantage of how rising prices change consumer behavior, and therefore does not fully protect consumers, and federal benefit programs, against inflation.

As a new, more conservative Congress convenes, it is uncertain how aggressive lawmakers will be in adopting any of these ideas for lowering budget deficits.

Tom Philpott, a former Coast Guardsman, has written about veterans and military personnel issues for more than 30 years.



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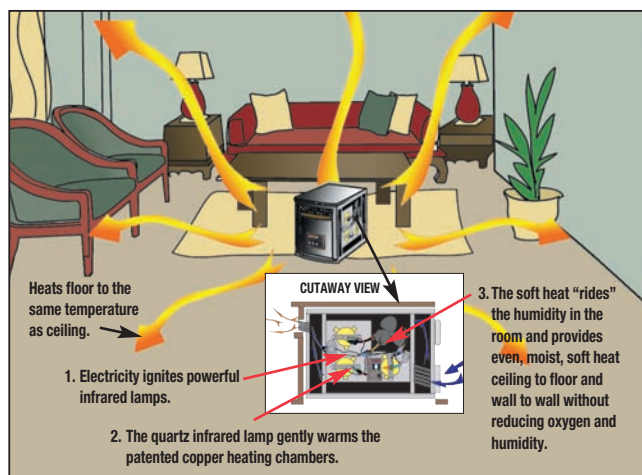
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Sacred Tobacco

Ho-Chunk Nation wants military authorities to stop confiscating it.

BY PHILIP M. CALLAGHAN

What is it that makes tobacco such a sacred object in the spiritual world of American Indians?

"It's not an item that we smoke at our leisure," says Wilfrid Cleveland, president of the Ho-Chunk Nation in central Wisconsin. "It's a blessing from the Creator. He gave us this tobacco to use in our ceremonies, to ask Him for guidance."

Sacred tobacco, Cleveland says, is no different from crosses, rosaries, Bibles or any other important religious objects. Most Ho-Chunks carry it with them, or keep it near them, in small pouches. When they join the military, their sacred tobacco goes with them.

"From the beginning of time, we had our ceremonies, and we were in unison with the Creator and the things around us," Cleveland says. "The

harmony that we live in with creation – part of that is our sacred ceremonies, and our elders offer tobacco to the Great Spirit for safekeeping our young ones going off to war."

Because sacred tobacco has a greenish-brown color – and usually looks quite different from the processed, chemical-added version packed into cigarettes – it is sometimes mistaken for marijuana. Over the years, several American Indian servicemembers have had their tobacco pouches confiscated by military authorities. The contents

ABOVE: Robert Mann displays the contents of his personal pouch of sacred tobacco, called "wak tani" in the Ho-Chunk language. Though the purpose, type and specific use of sacred tobacco varies between tribes, the cultural significance of the specially grown tobacco is universal. Valerie Tobias

are tested and determined to be perfectly legal but are almost never returned to the individuals.

The Ho-Chunk Nation wants the Department of Defense to stop taking its sacred tobacco.

Robert Mann is a veterans service officer for the Ho-Chunks, and works closely with three American Legion posts in the area: 442, 556 and 129. Whenever a tribal member's tobacco is confiscated in boot camp, during personnel inspections, or just before overseas deployments, Mann usually becomes involved. He thinks that some DoD personnel simply don't understand the importance of sacred tobacco in the Ho-Chunk belief system.

"You'd have to compare it to something that's precious to you," Mann says. "Let's say you carry a Bible. This Bible means an awful lot to you, and you carry it at all times. And somebody walks up and says, 'You can't have that,' and takes it away from you with no explanation.

"You think about our young warriors when this tobacco is given to them, and they're told what to use it for, and why it's there. Then it means much more to them, and they hold on to it tighter." So when a drill sergeant or an inspector takes the tobacco away, Mann says, "they're taking a part of their life from them."

Mistaken for Marijuana. Since Aug. 11, 1978, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act has been on the books to protect tribal rights "to believe, express, and exercise" their traditional religions, including "access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonials and traditional rites."

Less than a month after the 1978 law was passed, Marine Corps Pfc. James Pettibone had his sacred tobacco confiscated at Camp Lejeune, N.C. In a statement he wrote last year for the Ho-Chunk Nation's records, Pettibone explained that his tobacco was taken "because it resembled an illicit drug." One question put to him at the time was, "Is this that wacky tobacco you smoke to go on the warpath?"

"Thirty-two years later," Pettibone wrote, "we

are still dealing with wars that our sons and daughters have to contend with; thirty-two years later, our kids die and are still being stripped of their sacred tobacco pouches."

Among Ho-Chunks serving in the military, tobacco confiscation is infrequent. But it happens often enough to remind the tribe that some members of the armed forces continue to violate federal law, and remain ignorant about American Indian beliefs.

In 2009, Marcus Carriaga had his tobacco confiscated by U.S. Navy customs when his Marine unit deployed to Qatar. Mann believes that most such incidents go unreported.

James Greendeer, who joined the Marine Corps in 1959, thinks the use of marijuana by troops in the Vietnam War caused military authorities to become suspicious of sacred tobacco. Greendeer says he never had problems overseas with his tobacco or another sacred item he took from his Deer Clan's war bundle.

A former veterans service officer for the Ho-Chunks, Greendeer believes that marijuana use in the military is "why our Native Americans are being denied to have the sacred Indian tobacco. It's been more restrictive since the Vietnam era."

The Ho-Chunks never felt the need to explain their religious beliefs to the military or any other federal agency. "We never

made a loud commotion about who the Ho-Chunk people are," Mann says. "We just passed along the traditions down to our children. But now we see that, because of the drug problems the United States has, they are more scrutinizing."

A Warrior's Protection. The importance of sacred tobacco to Ho-Chunks, especially for those going to war, can be difficult for others to grasp. When an Army drill sergeant forced Pfc. Conroy Greendeer Jr., to surrender his tobacco pouch at Fort Sill, Okla., in 2003, he poured the sacred material on the ground, called it contraband, and told Greendeer



U.S. Marine Corps veteran Robert Mann pauses before raising the flag in honor of his father during the annual Ho-Chunk Nation Memorial Day Powwow in Black River Falls, Wis. Valerie Tobias

Watch video interviews with Ho-Chunk leaders online:
www.legion.org/magazine

eer he had no rights that permitted him special consideration.

Recounting this incident in a Dec. 29, 2003, letter to Secretary of the Army Les Brownlee, then-tribal president George Lewis wrote that the Army's actions "have dishonored the traditions of the Ho-Chunk Nation. American Indian warriors have a long and illustrious history of sacrifice and service in the armed forces of the United States, and the extremely serious nature of this incident has the potential to affect all Indians who serve in the United States military."

According to DoD, American Indians historically have the highest rate of military service per capita compared to other ethnic groups. Many Ho-Chunks have died in combat overseas, defending a country their ancestors once warred against. One of the tribe's fallen warriors, Cpl. Mitchell Red Cloud Jr., received the Medal of Honor for his actions in the Korean War on Nov. 5, 1950. Stationed on the point of a ridge right in front of his company's command post, Red Cloud was the first to face an onslaught of Chinese Communist troops charging from a brush-covered area less than 100 feet away.

Firing into the oncoming enemy wave with his automatic rifle, Red Cloud delayed the assault and gained time for his company to defend itself. When Cpl. Red Cloud died for his country, his sacred tobacco was with him.

In Vietnam, Andrew Thunder Cloud carried a pouch of tobacco given to him by his grandfather, who taught him about its purpose and how to use it. "Before you leave for Vietnam, go down to the ocean and put tobacco in the ocean for the Water Spirit," his grandfather advised. "Tell Him that you're going to be crossing the water and that you want a safe journey. When you get to the country that you're going to, put tobacco on the ground and offer it to God ... you're at the playground, and you're going to go play with the enemy. Ask Him to ensure your safety."

Thunder Cloud was a Navy corpsman whose

tour in Vietnam lasted from January 1967 to March 1968. His tribal elders told him to use his tobacco "when I was going into something difficult, or to use the tobacco when I returned from something that was difficult. And thanking God that I had made it through that ordeal safely. So that's what I did. I don't think I overdid it, but I found myself using my tobacco frequently."

When Thunder Cloud finished his Vietnam tour and arrived in Okinawa, his sacred tobacco was confiscated, tested and never returned. He asked

an officer to put his tobacco into a fire, instead of just throwing it away. "He said, 'Will do, Doc.' Whether he ever did or not, I don't know. But I tend to think the colonel was a man of honor. I'd like to think he kept his promise."



Herman Decorah of the Ho-Chunk Nation waves the Eagle Staff during the annual Ho-Chunk Nation Memorial Day Powwow. A Navy veteran, Decorah served two tours in Vietnam. Valerie Tobias

Enforcement and Education.

If the sacred objects of American Indians are already protected by federal law, why doesn't the military enforce zero-tolerance

of confiscations that are clearly illegal?

Every Monday morning, in front of the tribe's administrative building, the U.S. flag is raised while Ho-Chunks sing songs that honor their warriors. "Some of them never came back. Some came back, but they were different from before because of what they witnessed, what they did in the war," Cleveland says. "So every Monday morning, we raise the flag."

The Ho-Chunk president says it's frustrating that, given the wartime sacrifices his nation has made, legally protected sacred objects are still confiscated. "We understand the mindset of this society that dominates us, and it has no real consideration for what (a warrior) is carrying with him and the sacredness of it."

In 2009, William Goodbear was upset when he heard that two Marines from his tribe had tobacco pouches taken away when they returned from Iraq. So he approached Ray Lopez, who was commander of Post 129 in Black River Falls, to pass a resolution that would call for a policy change.

"He carried through, and got something passed



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on the district level,” Goodbear says. “So maybe on the state level we can do something about this.”

David Kurtz, adjutant of The American Legion’s Department of Wisconsin, thinks the key to solving the issue is education. DoD has to do a better job in teaching its own people that sacred tobacco is not a controlled substance.

“It’s got to be a priority of leadership to penetrate down to the drill instructors, to the NCOs, get down to where the rubber meets the road and educate them,” Kurtz says. “The military has so many administrative procedures to deal with somebody who enlists with different medical needs, or if they have different religious beliefs. It’s a question of willingness to accommodate these beliefs.”

Kurtz doesn’t see any good reason why the military can’t solve the problem. He refers to a 1996 executive order signed by President Bill Clinton, protecting American Indian sacred sites, as an example of the federal government’s commitment to resolve such issues favorably.

Perhaps another executive order is needed to finally drive home the message that sacred tobacco is not to be confiscated. Or maybe another amendment, as the Ho-Chunks recommended in a 2004 resolution that urged Congress to “include traditional tribal practices relating to the carrying of sacred materials by Indian members” of the military.

“Does it mean a congressional investigation?” Kurtz asks. “Is that what it would take to impress the leadership in DoD?”

“Sexual harassment, sexual assault, substance abuse, drinking – these things have been sufficiently emphasized by the leadership, and have penetrated to the boots on the ground that these kinds of behavior are not tolerated,” Kurtz says. “That same type of emphasis, making these sacred objects a priority, will solve this problem.”

For God and Country. Whether or not DoD decides to train its personnel more effectively, Cleveland wants to see another federal law passed that would

specifically protect “our items that we feel are sacred to us, when our young men and women are making the ultimate sacrifice and going out to war for the United States.”

Mann says sacred tobacco is linked to a warrior’s spirit, and that spirit lives on forever when a Ho-Chunk is killed in action. “This is part of our belief system. It is very sacred to us. Trying to explain this to people who don’t understand is really hard, because you have to live this life to understand it.”

Whatever one’s religious beliefs and whatever objects a servicemember holds sacred, they need to be respected by military authorities, Kurtz says. “As veterans, as Americans, we respect each other’s beliefs.”

“So if we’re going to associate with our brothers and sisters in all branches of the services, from all races, colors and creeds, it starts with those words: ‘For God and Country.’ That’s the beginning of camaraderie, and that’s

what we’re all about.”

Sitting in a large room with many photographs on the walls depicting Ho-Chunks who have served in war, Mann holds up his pouch of sacred tobacco and says, “If you take this away from me right now, I’d be hurt. And I would cry, because it’s part of my life.”

Whenever the military confiscates a pouch of sacred tobacco, it hurts that person not only mentally, but spiritually, Mann explains. “That’s what I think a lot of people don’t understand, the spiritual part of a Native American’s life. We’re a very spiritual people, and that spirituality goes real deep and far.

“So when you take this tobacco away, it’s taking a part of our life. It’s like you took a knife and stabbed that person. You might as well have done that, because what you’re doing to that person is hurting (him).” 🍀

Philip M. Callaghan is media marketing director for The American Legion.



Apesanahkwat, a member of the Menominee Indian tribe of northeastern Wisconsin and a combat veteran of the Vietnam War, pauses during the annual Ho-Chunk Nation Memorial Day Powwow. Valerie Tobias



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The Different Student

Well into its sophomore year, the Post-9/11 GI Bill generation grapples with campus life and combat mentality.

BY ANDY ROMEY



in glenwood

The Post-9/11 GI Bill is filled with complex provisions and specific requirements to meet the needs of veterans seeking modern college educations. But behind the benefit that became law in August 2008 is a simple philosophy: those who vowed to fight to the death for our country deserve the opportunity to get a degree and pursue a satisfying career after discharge.

A similar philosophy made the original GI Bill one of the most impactful pieces of legislation in U.S. history. When millions of veterans came home from World War II, waiting for them stateside were home loans, unemployment compensation and, most importantly, the opportunity to attend college on the government's dime. These unprecedented opportunities helped create a well-educated, homeownership and prosperous American middle class, a wave of society now described as our nation's "greatest generation."

Almost 70 years later, the nation is at a similar turning point. With wars on two fronts and an economy spinning in a recession, newly discharged veterans are once again looking to the GI Bill to guide their futures. Lawmakers and veterans advocates would like to believe that the Post-9/11 GI Bill will have the positive effect on the economy that its forefather legislation did, but the nature of higher education and the identity of the typical military veteran alike have changed dramatically over the decades. These days, almost everyone pursues some sort of additional schooling after high-school graduation, unlike a half-century ago. Also greatly changed is the traditional understanding of a college as a bricks-and-mortar institution.

These evolutions in academia have complicated the process of turning today's combat veterans into college students. The Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit itself, which The American Legion strongly supported, was almost too successful when it was first implemented in August 2009. Thousands of students applied for the benefit at once, creating a bottleneck that forced VA to make emergency cash payments to accommodate the first wave of GI Bill users. While the process of getting the benefit has smoothed out in its second year, other challenges persist. The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010 was passed in mid-December partly to address application and processing issues, as well as to expand the benefit to better serve National Guard and reserve veterans, and those who seek distance-learning or vocational educations.

Military veterans, especially those who saw

combat, often find it difficult to shift from military to college life. "It's tough," says Bob Madden, assistant director of the Legion's Economic Division. "They're older students, they're focused on getting their work done. They aren't going to join fraternities. These are different individuals than kids who are 19 and 20 years old. They are probably working, and they could have families."

These differences can create learning barriers, according to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), an organization that annually collects information and reports findings about student engagement and participation at four-year colleges. In this year's survey, NSSE asked students polled to specify if they were veterans.

The veteran students' answers greatly differed from traditional students in two areas. The survey found that student veterans, especially seniors, were less engaged with faculty and campus activities than their nonveteran counterparts, and perceived lower levels of support from the schools.

"The supportive-campus measurement of the survey was one of the items where we were finding a low systemic score among veterans, compared to regular students," NSSE Director Alex McCormick says. "That's what leads us to conclude that special attention should be paid to them."

At face value, the survey's findings are troubling. But they aren't indicative of a lack of effort on campuses, says Dan Sewell, national vice president of Student Veterans of America. To him, the issue isn't that academic institutions ignore student veterans – it's that they don't know how to embrace them.

"Most universities are very supportive of veterans, but most aren't understanding of the ways they should support them," says Sewell, a senior at the University of Missouri.

Methods of providing support vary and are still evolving. Many schools have support groups and organizations for veterans to join. Often, dedicated areas or buildings on campus are available for veterans. Some institutions employ counselors with military backgrounds to help veterans with benefits processing and personal issues.



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By R.K. BERRY
Universal Media Syndicate

UMS – Have you heard about the free heater giveaway that's sweeping across the nation?

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To what degree support services keep veteran students on campus and pursuing their educations is unknown. VA doesn't keep statistics on retention or degree completion for GI Bill users.

The dropout rate among veterans, however, is on the radar screen of VA's director of education services, Keith Wilson. "We can do the best job in the world with providing benefits to individuals, but if they don't stick with it and graduate, then it's all for naught," he says. "They need to get that degree so they can be the leaders the nation needs in the future."

At 28, Sewell is a typical Post-9/11 GI Bill student. He attends a major university, is older than his classmates, and is fully aware that his Air Force experience distinguishes him. When he started college in 2007, many of the veterans-support and outreach programs now available at his college were just starting to spring up. Though he never perceived a lack of support, he understands how veterans feel after the abrupt change of lifestyles.

"I think the initial reaction veterans have when they first get on campus is to be disengaged," Sewell says. "But in my opinion, and in my experience, if you do your best to engage these students and try to find an understanding, the connection is going to be very valuable for the veteran and the student, because the veteran can gain a sense of comfort, and the student can gain insight into what the military is like."

"In some ways, it's no different than what schools should do for other students," McCormick says. "Schools should do some sort of needs assessment and find out what things are going well and what roadblocks might exist for them – what is contributing to these feelings of there not being adequate support on campus. Institutions should look for models out there. There are campuses that accommodate veterans well. There are colleges that have offices that assist veterans in their adjustment to campus. It's not rocket science."

The survey shows that the disconnect isn't caused by a lack of interest in academics. McCormick says it's particularly noteworthy that the study found that veterans applied about the same amount of time to school as their peers, even though they had other obligations.

"Veterans spend more time working and more time caring for dependents, but they are spending just as much time studying," McCormick says. "They have all these responsibilities, but they are every bit as serious as other students."

The stakes are high, Madden says. If the problem worsens, and the veterans don't complete their

THE VETERAN ON CAMPUS

In 2010, the National Survey of Student Engagement surveyed nearly 362,000 students, of whom 11,000 identified themselves as veterans. They were asked about their learning experiences and perceptions on their campuses.

- Although veterans on average worked more hours per week and were likely to spend more time caring for dependents, they studied as many hours per week as nonveteran students.
- Student veterans, especially seniors, were generally less engaged, and perceived lower levels of support from their campuses than their nonveteran peers.
- College-enrolled veterans were predominantly male, and more likely than traditional students to attend school part time as first-generation students, transfer students or online learners. This was especially true for combat veterans.
- Approximately one in five enrolled combat veterans reported having at least one disability, compared to about one in 10 nonveterans.
- Veterans attended all types of institutions, but were more likely to be at public schools than students without service backgrounds.
- Veterans were less likely than nonveterans to attend baccalaureate arts and sciences colleges or research-intensive, doctorate-granting universities.
- Among first-year students and seniors polled, combat veterans spent significantly more time working than traditional students and veterans who didn't see combat.
- Full-time first-year combat veterans spent twice as much time working and about six times as many hours on dependent care, per week, as their nonveteran peers.
- Compared to first-year nonveterans, first-year noncombat veterans were less engaged with faculty, and first-year combat veterans perceived less campus support than nonveterans.
- Despite the perceived lack of support and the tendency to engage faculty less, there were no significant differences between first-year student veterans and nonveterans in levels of overall satisfaction.

educations after they separate, a great disservice could be done to those who have served so honorably, he says. And, from an economic perspective, if student veterans are allowed to drift, he adds, they won't fulfill the promise of a modern GI Bill that has a tough act to follow. ☞

Andy Romey is assistant web editor for The American Legion.



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Let Freedom Roar

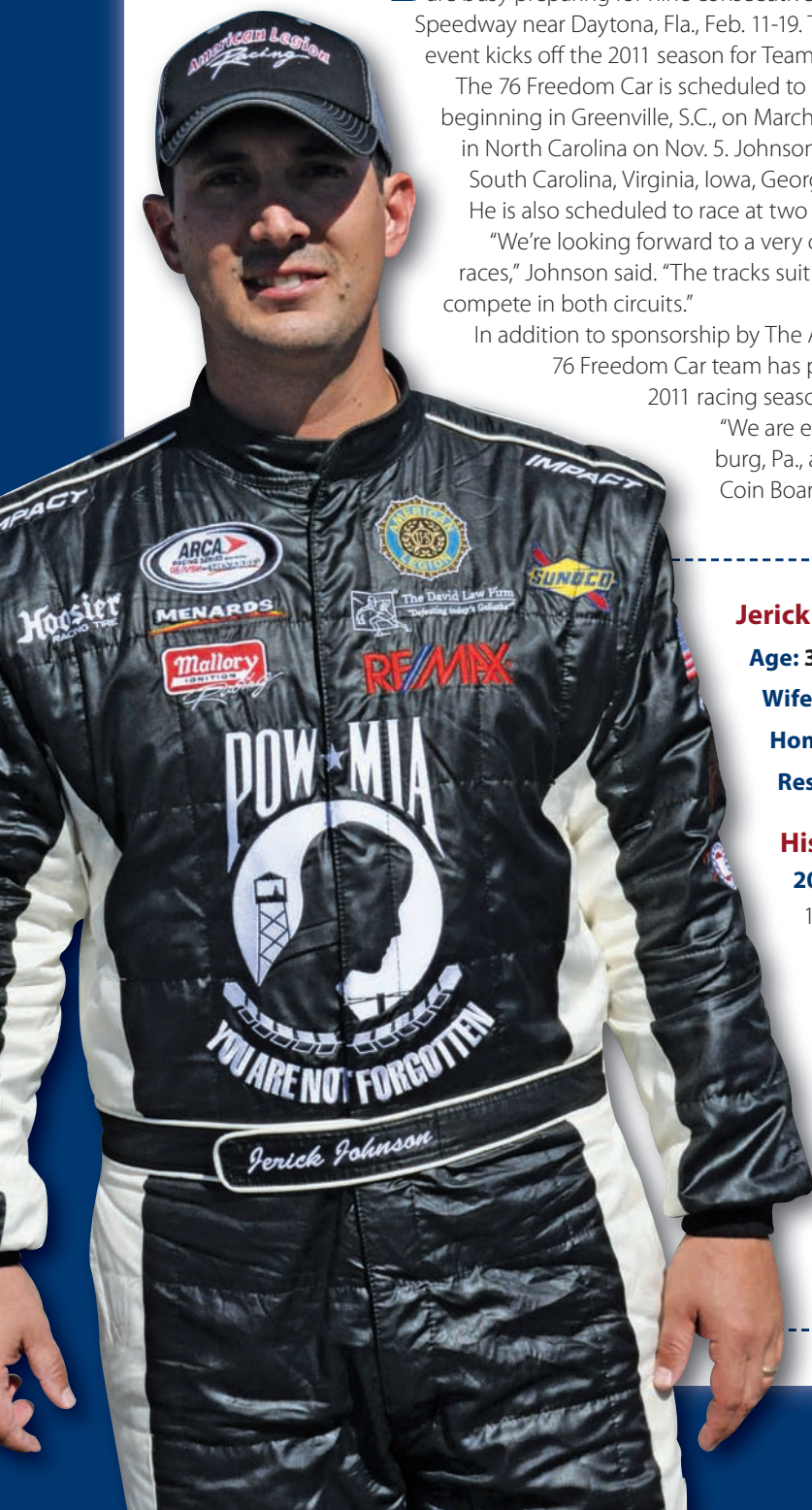
Driver Jerick Johnson and The American Legion/David Law Firm 76 Freedom Car team are busy preparing for nine consecutive days of oval-track competition at New Smyrna Speedway near Daytona, Fla., Feb. 11-19. The World Series of Asphalt Stock Car Racing event kicks off the 2011 season for Team Johnson Motorsports.

The 76 Freedom Car is scheduled to compete in 10 other races in two racing series, beginning in Greenville, S.C., on March 26 and concluding at Rockingham Speedway in North Carolina on Nov. 5. Johnson will strap in for NASCAR K&N Pro Series races in South Carolina, Virginia, Iowa, Georgia, New Hampshire, Minnesota, and Delaware. He is also scheduled to race at two USAR events in North Carolina and one in Indiana.

"We're looking forward to a very competitive season in NASCAR Pro and USAR races," Johnson said. "The tracks suit our style of racing. We should be able to compete in both circuits."

In addition to sponsorship by The American Legion and The David Law Firm, the 76 Freedom Car team has picked up an additional associate sponsor for the 2011 racing season.

"We are excited to welcome US Coin Boards of Mechanicsburg, Pa., as a sponsor," Johnson said. "The addition of US Coin Boards makes us a stronger race program."



Jerick Johnson

Age: 30 **Height:** 6'1" **Weight:** 210

Wife: Tamara **Children:** Jadyn, Tyler

Hometown: Faribault, Minn.

Residence: Mooresville, N.C.

His accomplishments

2010 Competed in 14 ARCA Series races, finishing 19th in championship points and second in Hard Charger category

2009 ASA Late Model Challenge Series Rookie of the Year, ninth in points

2009 GM Performance Parts Shootout winner, O'Reilly Raceway Park, Indianapolis

2007 Competed in five NASCAR Busch Series races, including the inaugural NASCAR race in Canada

2006 American Legion 76 Freedom Car first NASCAR Busch Series start in Milwaukee

The American Legion/David Law Firm 2011 Freedom Car Race Schedule

Feb. 11-19	World Series of Asphalt Stock Car Racing	New Smyrna, Fla.
March 26	Greenville-Pickens Speedway	Greenville, S.C.
April 28	Richmond International Speedway	Richmond, Va.
May 21	Iowa Speedway	Newton, Iowa
June 11	Gresham Motorsports Park	Jefferson, Ga.
July 15	New Hampshire Motor Speedway	Loudon, N.H.
Aug. 13	Concord Speedway	Charlotte, N.C.
Aug. 27	Elko Speedway	Elko, Minn.
Sep. 30	Dover International Speedway	Dover, Del.
Oct. 22	O'Reilly Raceway Park	Indianapolis
Nov. 5	Rockingham Speedway	Rockingham, N.C.

Racing schedules are subject to change. Stay up to date at www.legion.org/racing

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Legionnaires can support the Freedom Car team by donating or purchasing racing merchandise, buying racing apparel from Emblem Sales online or over the phone, hosting fundraisers, booking the show car and Johnson, or securing an associate or honorary sponsorship.

www.legion.org/racing





Sean Crosier

MY WAR ON TWO FRONTS

Battles with the Japanese – and Jim Crow – shaped this black Seabee's life.

BY JOSEPH CONKLIN LANIER II

The following recollection is adapted from an article that originally appeared in the Spring 2010 issue of WWII Quarterly.

How I, then a teenager of African descent, found myself thousands of miles away from my rural Mississippi home and on a dangerous volcanic island known as Iwo Jima in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, where tens of thousands of men met violent deaths, is a journey at which I still marvel today, more than 65 years later.

In many ways, my transition from small-town youth to one of the U.S. Navy's Seabee (Construction Battalion) units is not all that remarkable. After all, some 1,150,000 blacks served in the U.S. military during World War II. On the other hand, what we went through helped to profoundly

change the course of history in this country.

To understand how all this came about, let us start at the beginning – my beginning.

In 1935, when I was 9, my folks moved from a rural area, where my father had rented about 40 acres of land, to Memphis Town on the outskirts of Columbus, Miss., which was then completely racially segregated. Drinking fountains, restrooms, hotels, barbershops and restaurants were marked either “White” or “Colored.” Ditto for public transportation. There was no mixing of the races, except when blacks were hired to perform menial labor for whites. Although we silently resented the situation, there was no arguing about it. That’s just the way it was. Tradition. The status quo. Jim Crow. Segregation.

On Oct. 27, 1940, my mother died at 49. My father was left with two daughters – Ruth, 11, and Gladys, 9 – myself at 14, and my older brother Ira

at 25. Our father never remarried. He did not have a regular job, so he became a handyman.

Doing all he could to care for his family, Papa was not home very often. I dropped out of school when I was in the sixth grade. My father was not happy about it; he had a sixth-grade education, too, and he knew that if his children were to break out of poverty, education was the key. Nonetheless, I got a job delivering groceries to white families for \$2 a week. Later I got a job washing dishes for \$3.50 a week – 12 hours a day, seven days a week, with one meal a day. After I was there for a while, I felt I had earned a raise, up to the same amount the rest of the guys were paid. I asked the owner for \$5 a week. She fired me.

I understood I needed to go back to school, and at 17, I knew I had to do something to help my father. I had seen the posters and advertisements about the U.S. Armed Forces, so I went to the Navy recruiting office and asked to sign up. I had no particular reason to choose the Navy. At the time (early 1944), I was not aware that, if accepted, I would be among the first blacks to be inducted into the Navy with the rating of seaman, for the armed forces were then almost as segregated as Columbus, Miss.

Prior to my enlisting, blacks in the Navy could only be steward's mates, which meant you were a waiter for the officers. I had simply decided to go into the service; what I would be doing did not matter. At 17, I needed parental approval to enlist, so I asked my father if he would sign the papers. I assured him I would send him a monthly allotment to help with my sisters.

He agreed, and on Feb. 2, 1944, I became an apprentice seaman. I had nine days before I had to report to the naval office in Jackson, Miss. Even there, total segregation was still in force. They couldn't put me up in a hotel; I had to be housed with an approved colored family.

But when I later arrived in Chicago for training, I was awestruck. Back in Mississippi, my entire world was about 15 square miles. I had never seen tall buildings before, and the sheer size of the place was beyond my imagination. Even more amazing, I saw black people and white people riding together on streetcars and on the "L," and there were no separate seats for blacks, no separate facilities for whites and blacks that I could see.

At Great Lakes, we lived on a part of the base called Camp Robert Smalls, which was set aside exclusively for the training of black sailors. We marched and marched. It didn't make any sense to me then, but I eventually learned it was a method

to teach us discipline – among other things. We black sailors were sort of a show, because our marching formation was not ramrod straight. We did all kinds of funny steps that would not have been tolerated, for instance, at the Naval Academy. The white officers would come to watch us do our thing. It was like, "These colored guys don't have to be professional; they're here for our amusement. They have a rhythm white guys don't have. Besides, they're here to do the 'scut' work."

During this period, the first black officers had been commissioned in the Navy. They all came by our camp to give us hope that we could have a naval officer career. I remember thinking, so much for the vow that Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox had taken at an earlier time: "The Navy will remain lily-white."

I remember wanting to be a naval officer after I met those ensigns. Later I learned that with less than a ninth-grade education, there was no way that would happen unless I went back to school.

After boot camp, we were all given the rating of seaman second class; that had never happened to blacks before. We then got a nine-day leave, and I went back to Mississippi. My father was not an emotional man, but he was visibly proud of his son. Everybody in our neighborhood made me feel proud that I was in uniform.

Before I went in the Navy, I had worked in a laundry as a presser, so I went by the shop to visit the people who were still there. The owners were happy to see me in uniform. I went back to the pressers' area, and there was a new foreman, a white man. I introduced myself, and when he asked me a question, I answered, "Yes."

His response was, "You say 'yes, sir' to me, and don't you forget your place." It was a grim reminder that, in uniform or not, I was still not equal.

All of this humiliation was, and is, hurtful, but I don't remember it being surprising to me. I never allowed it to rise to the emotion of hate. For that, I give credit to my father; he never taught us to hate.

When I returned to Great Lakes, I learned that we would be leaving the next day for California. Our new commanding officer told us we were going to do whatever we needed to do to kill the "Japs." Then he said, and I repeat verbatim: "I am from Georgia, and I want you all to know that there are two kinds of niggers: a good nigger and a dead nigger, and we don't want any dead ones." Three older men in our group went to the base commander and protested the officer's behavior. He was removed from our unit, and we were told he was busted to seaman first class. We never had

any confirmation of that, though it could have happened.

In any case, a chief petty officer, a short guy, was promoted to lieutenant junior grade and assigned to our unit. We all knew him; he would accompany the officer of the day on his rounds of inspection when we were in boot camp. If your bunk was not made up properly, your mattress was pulled off your bunk, and the officer would walk on it, and you would get extra duty. Thus his nickname, “Extra-Duty Shorty.”

On our train ride to California, we stopped in Omaha, Neb., for dinner. The Red Cross ladies – all white – had prepared dinner for us at the train station, with white tablecloths and flowers on the tables. There were no signs over the water fountains or restrooms that read “Colored” or “White.” And the ladies were so friendly; they even casually touched us. I had never witnessed this before from white people, especially females.

When our troop train arrived in Oakland, Calif., buses took us to Camp Shoemaker, about 40 miles east of Oakland; we were there about three weeks. Every weekend we got liberty and, in addition to taking in all the beauty of the countryside, I had the opportunity to mingle with all kinds of people.

I must admit that when I needed to use the facilities, I would find myself looking for the sign marked “Colored.” It took time for that cautiousness to go away. I was fascinated, taking in all the newness of almost everything I saw and experienced – especially this new freedom, which allowed me to engage people of different races and ethnicities other than myself, and I didn’t have to say “Yes, sir” or “Yes, ma’am.” If I didn’t, there was no fear I would get a closed fist in my face.

Then came time to sleep. None of us could afford a hotel, since \$29 a month didn’t go very far, even in 1944. My hotel was the San Francisco train station waiting room. I wasn’t the only service-member to use the waiting room for that purpose.

At the end of our stay at Camp Shoemaker, our commanding officer told us that buses would take us to the pier, where we would board a ship that would take us to an unknown destination. Even this was an adventure for me; I had never been on a ship before. As a matter of fact, before Great Lakes, I had never even seen a ship.

As we moved from the pier, I stayed on deck to watch San Francisco fall behind the horizon. It was an experience I have no words to describe. I don’t know where I thought the city had gone; I just know it scared me. I could not imagine being detached from the United States.

On the seventh day, we saw land. We were told it was Honolulu, Hawaii. After we disembarked, we were taken to a building at Pearl Harbor where we waited around. Finally, we were taken to the mess hall for lunch; afterwards, we marched to our barracks. One of the things I noticed was that in addition to Navy personnel most of the civilians I saw cleaning the floors and taking out trash were Hawaiian or Asian, not white. That was a huge difference from what I was used to, a different kind of discrimination. Even though the civilians were not black, it was clear they were doing the kind of “scut” work blacks did back home.

After a day or two, our commanding officer gave us our assignments. Mine was at the boathouse. I was to report in my white uniform. When I reported, I learned why. There were two ways you could go across the bay to travel to Honolulu. You could catch the ferry or you could ride in small boats. The advantage of the small boats was that they didn’t have a regular schedule. They would go across the bay, let off passengers, and return to Pearl Harbor for more passengers. Those small boats had to have someone tie them up at the dock on both sides of the bay. My assignment was to tie and untie the small boats. I was disappointed, but I really did not resent this assignment. I saw my duty as doing whatever it took to make a contribution to victory.

In early January 1945, our commanding officer assembled our group. He called out several names, mine included, and told us we were being transferred to the 23rd (Special) CBs. I didn’t know what the CBs were, but it sounded to me like another adventure, and I welcomed it.

CB stands for Construction Battalions, and they are roughly like the engineers in the Army. They build whatever the Navy needs: roads, airfields, ports, you name it. They also load and unload cargo. Our 23rd (Special) CB, or “Seabee” unit, was attached to the 3rd Marine Division. We had about 20 officers and almost 1,000 enlisted men.

Our job was to unload ships and boats full of cargo and deliver it either to supply dumps or directly to the Marines under fire. Records show that we were 75.5-percent black, but our commander, H.W. Heuer, was white, as were our officers and most of the NCOs.

We were moved to Iroquois Point, Oahu, where we remained for about three weeks. Then we boarded ship to another destination unknown. We stopped at the Marshall Islands, Guam, Saipan and Tinian, which had all been captured in 1944, but none of us left the ship at any stop.

On Feb. 24, when we arrived at Iwo Jima, it was D+5, which means that the operation to capture the island had begun five days earlier. There was an airfield there, and the United States wanted to take the island in order to use it as a base for our B-29 bombers.

The Japanese, naturally, did not want to give it up because the loss of Iwo Jima would mean more heavy bombing raids against their home islands. So they beefed up their defenses by increasing their garrison to nearly 23,000 men, who were given a “stand-or-die” order and were told that there was no hope of rescue or reinforcement. Each man was expected to fight to the last bullet and take as many Americans with him as possible before he himself died for the emperor and for Japan.

The plan was for the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions, with the 3rd Division in reserve, to land on the southern beaches to the east of Mount Suribachi, take the mountain, and move inland to capture the airfield, all the while pushing the Japanese into the northern part of the island where they could be finished off.

For three days, starting on Feb. 16, 1945, dozens of U.S. warships stood off the island and barraged every inch of it with high explosives, while carrier-based fighters hit it from the air. After this pounding, the Marines would go ashore to wipe out any opposition that remained. Unfortunately for the Marines, though, most of the defenders, safely hiding deep in their underground fortress, hadn’t been wiped out. They were ready and waiting to strike back.

From the 19th to the 24th of February, the Marines and Japanese had been slugging it out, with no quarter asked and none given. When the defenders refused to come out of their fighting holes or bunkers, Marines with flamethrowers burned them out. It was slaughter on a mass scale. The Marines suffered greatly, too. In the 35-day battle for Iwo Jima, more than 6,800 of the 30,000 Marines who came ashore were killed, and over 19,000 were wounded. It was the greatest single loss of life in the Marine Corps’ history.

I understand that, of the 22,780-man Japanese garrison, only a little more than 200 survived. Many committed suicide rather than surrender. So brutal was the fighting that, afterwards, Adm. Chester Nimitz said, “At Iwo Jima, uncommon valor was a common virtue.” Twenty-seven Marines and sailors were awarded Medals of Honor.

Black troops on Iwo also performed with bravery. Two Marines from the all-black 36th Depot Company were awarded Bronze Stars. When we left our ship and came ashore on the 24th, we dug foxholes into the soft, volcanic soil at the base of Mount Suribachi. At the top of the 500-foot mountain, a squad of Marines had planted the U.S. flag there the day before, but we couldn’t see it from where we were dug in at the base. The fighting was still going on. It was so fierce we had to stay in our foxholes for days.

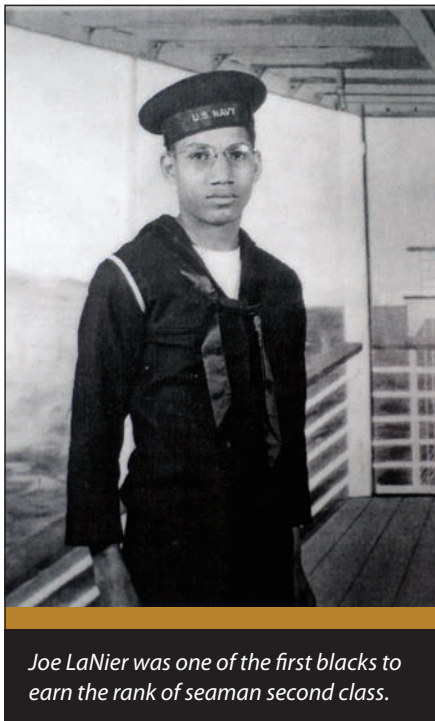
Even after we secured the southwestern part of Iwo Jima, Japanese soldiers were still inside the mountain. They had lots of food and water stored there, so starving them out took a long time.

The commanding general of the Japanese at Iwo, Tadamichi Kuribayashi, had been the military attache for Japan in Washington from 1928 to 1930. He had been invited on a number of occasions to tour U.S. military facilities, so he had a good idea of our

strengths and weaknesses. And that is why the island was so well-fortified: bomb-proof pillboxes, miles of interconnecting tunnels with multiple entrances and exits, large mortar and rocket launchers, howitzers, and tank guns on the beach. He told his troops to let the enemy land and make some small progress, then open up and hit them where they stand. They did that.

Kuribayashi had a rule: “Each man has a duty to kill 10 of the enemy before dying. Until we are destroyed to the last man, we shall harass the enemy with guerrilla tactics.”

The battle, which began with the naval shelling and aerial bombardments on Feb. 16, officially ended on March 26, although I read somewhere that a few Japanese soldiers were found still alive on the island several years later.



Joe LaNier was one of the first blacks to earn the rank of seaman second class.

The 23rd (Special) Construction Battalion was mainly a black stevedoring unit, but even offloading cargo was a dangerous job on Iwo Jima; you never knew when the enemy would lob a mortar round or artillery shell into your area. Two of our companies received unit citations for performing “under extremely hazardous conditions.” As far as I was concerned, it was all hazardous. There wasn’t a spot on that island that was safe.

After the fighting died down a little, we moved from our foxholes to tents we set up farther inland. Finally, the Marines secured the island, but enemy shelling and air raids continued sporadically, and Tokyo Rose still broadcast her propaganda to us.

At that time, I was working in the carpenter shop, where we cut the lumber for the floors for our tents. Before we left Iwo, however, one humiliating incident occurred. An officer came by and was having a conversation with one of the white carpenters as I stood nearby. The officer had a fast speech delivery. As he spoke, he realized he was not giving the other person time to respond. He said, “Geez, I’m behaving like a nigger.”

Instantly, he realized I had heard his remarks. I walked away. Later, I asked to speak with him, and he granted my request. I told him how humiliated I was to hear such a word from an officer. He admitted he

was in error and gave me an apology. It was clear to me his apology was real. I felt good that I had accepted his apology. I understood no human being is perfect.

By the spring of 1945, Iwo Jima was completely secure and America’s methodical move to the invasion of Japan was continuing. Despite the good intentions of some in the armed forces, each branch of service was still segregated. Since my branch was the Navy, I can only speak to what I saw there. All black servicemembers who were in the Navy were in all-black units. The one exception was Headquarters, which was code for white officers and enlisted personnel who interpreted the military policy by which the unit operated.

In all the time I was in the Navy, I met only one black chief petty officer, and he was clearly in a clerical position. So the entire makeup of Head-

quarters in our unit was white. At that time, there was no talk of integrating the armed services. That didn’t happen until President Truman issued an executive order in 1948.

About the middle of August 1945, we left Iwo and sailed for about a month, toward Okinawa. When we arrived, about half of the island was secure. Compared to Iwo Jima, Okinawa was huge. After we got settled, it was time to get our assignments. I was one of those guys on general duty – I did whatever, whenever.

One time, I was assigned to truck-driving duty and was carrying a load of ammunition to the front line. When I passed the sentry post, there was no one there, so I just kept going. I couldn’t have been more than 100 yards past the post when, suddenly, enemy fire went across my truck. I backed out as quickly as I could. By this time, the guard was back at the sentry post. I asked him

why he wasn’t there to tell me I was going up the wrong road. His reply: “I figured you’d find out soon enough,” or words to that effect. That is the kind of humor we dealt with in the heat of battle.

On Okinawa, I mostly worked in the mess hall. Of all the duties I was assigned, I liked the mess hall the least. I don’t remember how long I worked there, but they needed a waiter in the officer’s mess, so I was chosen to fill that vacancy.

My rank was not changed to steward’s mate, but I performed that function. I was not enthralled with the assignments given me; I recognized that black sailors were not thought of by the powers that be as “real” sailors, but the reality was, it didn’t matter. The situation was what it was, and for me, I needed to make the best of it and be proud of whatever contribution I made to my country, even if it was just waiting on white officers.

I was 19 by this time, the war in Europe was over, Japan had surrendered, and it was time for me to make a decision about what I wanted to do with my life. I heard about the GI Bill of Rights and decided to check it out. On my day off, I went back to the main camp and got an explanation. Any servicemember could go to school, and the government would pay for tuition, books and \$90 a month equal to the number of months

Black sailors were not
thought of as “real” sailors.
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served. I could find no reason not to do this.

Joining the Navy had been the best thing that had ever happened to me. I had visited places I didn't know existed. I got to travel the world, and I enjoyed almost every minute of it. I remember how awed I was when, on the way to Iwo Jima, we crossed the equator and the international date line. I really looked forward to going to Japan, but then the war ended. On Dec. 5, 1945, we boarded ship to return to the United States.

I had watched San Francisco drop behind the horizon almost two years before, which produced fear in me; there was nothing but joy when I saw America show up on the horizon as we arrived home. In Portland, Ore., we were given our 30-day leave the day before New Year's, 1946. I did not want to be on a train on New Year's Day, so I decided to remain in Portland until after New Year's. I met a very nice family that let me stay in a spare room until I left on Jan. 2.

I had a three-hour layover in Denver, another place I had never heard of. I went to a drugstore that had an ice-cream counter and booths. I ordered an ice-cream cone, but I was not sure I was welcome to sit. The white female clerk sensed my hesitation and suggested that I sit and enjoy my cone. I can't tell you what a relief that was. This was the first time I had been alone in a city outside the South. I also went to a movie, and I saw no signs directing me to go upstairs to the seats set aside for blacks. (At home, we called the balcony the "crows' nest.") And, as I observed the neighborhoods, I noticed they were washing the streets. I had never seen that. I was so impressed, I made the decision that after I was discharged I would come back to Denver and make it my home.

After being separated from the Navy on Feb. 2, I returned to Mississippi; nothing had changed. Total separation of the races was still in force. I found myself becoming restless. I spoke with Dr. Allen, who operated the lone black drugstore in Columbus. I had given some thought to becoming a physician, but here I was, almost 20, and I had not yet finished the ninth grade. He encouraged me to "get with it" and finish high school. I enrolled in high school in Holly Springs, Miss.

The town voter registrar's office was open for voting, for what election I don't remember. Having served two years in the U.S. Navy, I knew I had a right to vote. It was a spur-of-the-moment decision; I had no agenda. When I entered the office, dressed in my Navy uniform, the white registrar seemed surprised to see me. I told her that I wanted to register to vote. In a stern voice she told me,

"Niggers don't vote," and invited me to leave, which I did. I remember thinking, I volunteered for the Navy to preserve the right of freedom in this country and still I have not earned the right to vote. It was a humiliating experience. To this day, I cherish the right to cast my vote, and I consider it very private.

After graduating from high school, I enrolled in pharmacy school at Xavier University in New Orleans in September 1948. I struggled to keep my grades up. The nuns knew we black students came from inferior high schools, so they put on classes at night and on the weekends so we could get special help. I took advantage of all the classes I needed, because I was behind.

To graduate, I had to take 27 semester hours my senior year, a crushing load. The dean did not want me to do that, but I told him I had to finish because there was no way I could come back for a fifth year. I made better grades that semester than I did when I was taking regular hours. That gave me an insight into my resolve.

After graduating, I moved to Denver and was pharmacy director at several hospitals, and even owned my own drugstore for a while. In 1957, I married Eula Inez Long, and we had two wonderful children, Lisa Downing and Joseph III, now grown. Last year, we celebrated 52 years of married life. I was involved in efforts to end discrimination in housing in Denver, and I'm pleased to say that today everybody can buy and live anywhere they can afford. As I see it, we as a people, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once put it, must learn to judge each other by the content of our character rather than by the color of our skin. That might very well take longer to achieve than the time we have spent on the bumpy road we have already traveled.

I can truthfully say that, as terrible as the war was, World War II and my service with the Navy provided me with opportunities that I most likely would never have experienced otherwise.

And whenever I see a U.S. flag, I am always reminded of the one that was raised on top of a mountain on a small, bloody island in the Pacific Ocean. And I am grateful. 🌿

Joe LaNier is a member of American Legion Post 1260 in Littleton, Colo.

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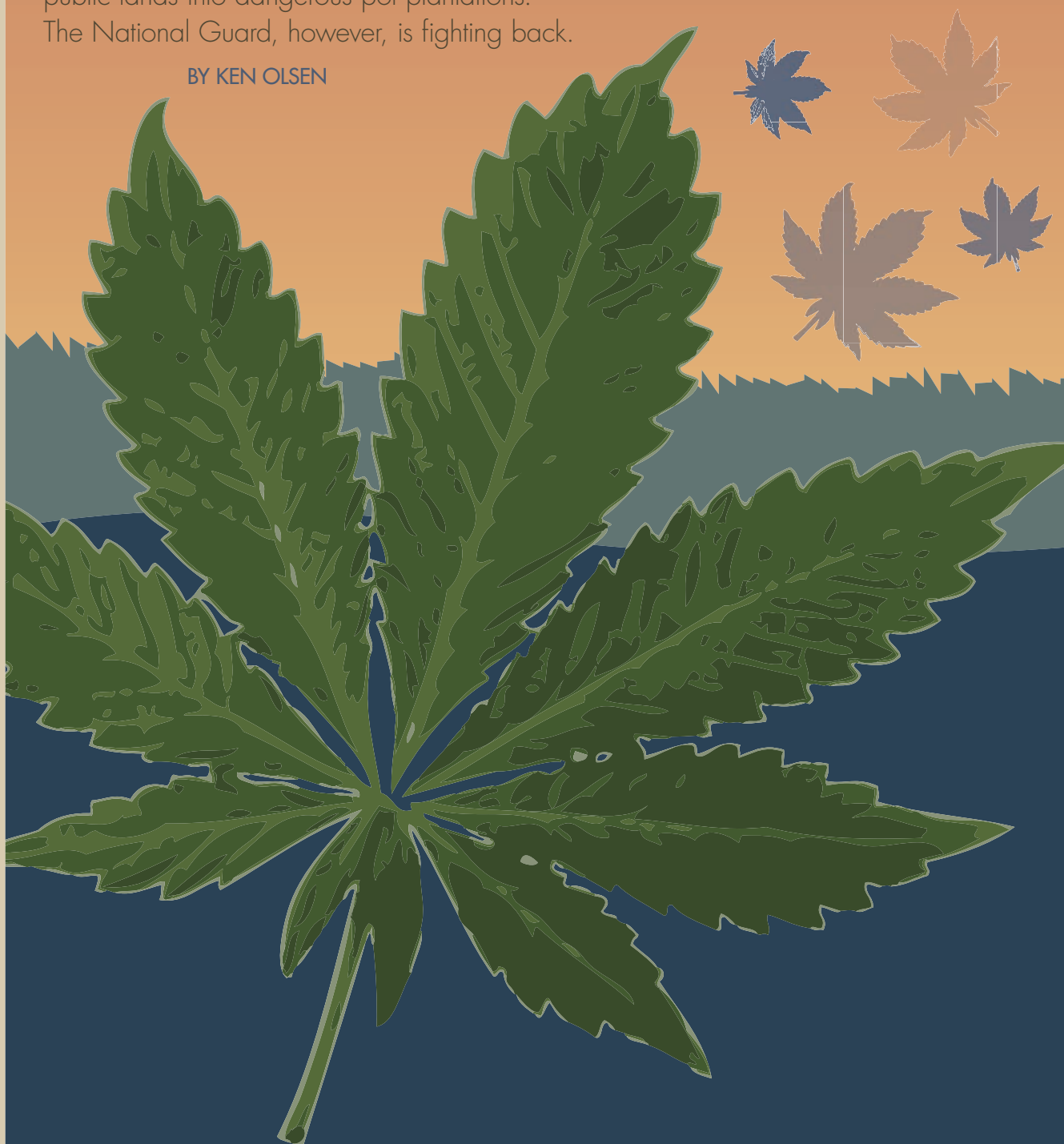
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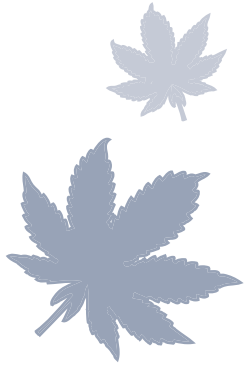
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JOINT OPERATIONS

Drug traffickers are turning remote stretches of public lands into dangerous pot plantations. The National Guard, however, is fighting back.

BY KEN OLSEN





"THERE'S MARIJUANA GROWN ON MOST NATIONAL FORESTS ON SOME LEVEL. IT'S A SIGNIFICANT DRAIN ON OUR RESOURCES."

— TRACY PERRY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
AND INVESTIGATIONS FOR THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE

Last spring, a bear hunter spotted two men preparing a marijuana field in a secluded aspen grove in Wisconsin's Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. He alerted law enforcement, which staked out the grove and tailed the men sneaking in supplies and sneaking out massive bags of mature plants. Authorities also scoured the area from the air with the help of Wisconsin and Iowa National Guard counterdrug units. Over the next three months, they compiled an impressive file of faces and places connected to the operation, one of hundreds of illegal pot farms that are polluting the backcountry and endangering hikers, hunters and other outdoors enthusiasts.

The result: an August raid that took down eight secret national-forest marijuana plantations in Wisconsin, along with a growing operation on a nearby Indian reservation and a drug-processing house in a small town south of Green Bay. Confiscated were 11,000 marijuana plants, 300 pounds of processed pot, a firearms stash, cash and vehicles. Thirteen men, most of whom were illegal aliens, were arrested.

It was an especially satisfying victory, says David Spakowicz, eastern Wisconsin field operations director for the state's Department of Justice. "These are the first people we've been able to arrest in connection with marijuana-growing operations on (Wisconsin) public lands."

The Wisconsin bust was far from the largest national-forest drug haul last year. A July sweep of two national forests and three national parks in California – including Yosemite – yielded 605,000 marijuana plants and 6,000 pounds of processed pot, plus cocaine, methamphetamine, morphine, \$84,000 in cash, 64 weapons and 125 arrests. Even that score, executed with the help of 112 members of the California National Guard counterdrug program, is a fraction of the more than 3 million marijuana plants seized

annually in national forests and national parks. It's all a product of the industrial-strength marijuana-farming juggernaut that Mexican drug-trafficking organizations have created on public lands to satiate America's estimated \$25 billion appetite for weed.

"It has increased significantly every year over the last decade," says Tracy Perry, deputy director of law enforcement and investigations for the U.S. Forest Service. "There's marijuana grown on most national forests on some level. It's a significant drain on our resources."

It's also quite destructive. Illicit pot farmers are polluting public drinking-water supplies, poaching wildlife, and leaving massive quantities of garbage and human waste in the backcountry. Confrontations between well-armed growers and law enforcement, or hikers and hunters, are increasingly violent.

"I let our investigation go on a little bit longer," Spakowicz says of the recent Wisconsin bust, "all the while fearing a call from the wife of a hunter who went out and didn't come back."

Guerrilla Farming. Growing pot in national forests is almost a cultural tradition in some parts of the country. Mom-and-pop plots have been grown in California since at least the 1960s. Wisconsin's weed-cultivating days date back to the first half of the 20th century, when it was a top industrial-cannabis producer.

"People had 40 acres of hemp, blessed by the state," Spakowicz says. When rope manufacturers turned to other fibers, many hemp farmers abandoned their fields, and hearty marijuana plants spread, giving rise to a volunteer crop now known as "ditch weed."

By the 1980s, people grew three dozen or four dozen plants behind their cornfields or out on the back forty. When law enforcement started seizing their land, marijuana growers moved their illicit

crops to unknowing neighbors' lands or national forests, an endeavor that became known as "guerrilla farming." Local economic conditions were an influence as well. A spike in the number of marijuana plots in the Daniel Boone National Forest in Kentucky in the late 1980s and early 1990s might be blamed on the region's poverty and employment dependence on swings in the coal-mining industry, Perry says.

Tighter border security in the wake of 9/11 prompted Mexican drug organizations to rely less on smuggling and more on growing marijuana inside the United States, law-enforcement authorities say. These sophisticated drug operations established some of their first major plantations in national forests and parks in California, then expanded eastward. To them, it made business sense to produce pot as close as possible to the customers. National forests and parks are ideal. The vast, remote acreages offer a place for drug organizations to set up camps and cultivate cannabis crops without much worry of detection.

Wisconsin is an attractive place to grow marijuana farms because it lacks sufficient law enforcement to cover massive tracts of state and federal land, particularly in the northern half of the state. It's also close to Chicago, one of the largest drug-distribution hubs in the United States, Spakowicz says. And there's a ready market nearby among the 30 million people in the surrounding five states.

"Our best guess is it's being consumed in Minneapolis, Detroit, Chicago and other large metropolitan areas," Spakowicz says.

Destructive Force. The drug-trafficking groups have well-honed techniques for large-scale pot farming, right down to tailoring a strain of marijuana that thrives in the local climate. In Wisconsin, growers appear to have developed fast-maturing plants that yield two crops each season, Spakowicz says.

Large-scale operations, however, can cause large-scale destruction. Growers have diverted streams to irrigate their marijuana plots. They have destroyed wildlife habitats, dug garbage pits

WEEDING OUT MARIJUANA FARMS

The number of marijuana plants seized from illegally-cultivated plots on national-forest lands has skyrocketed in the past decade.

YEAR	NUMBER OF PLANTS SEIZED NATIONALLY	NUMBER OF PLANTS SEIZED IN CALIFORNIA	U.S. FOREST SERVICE EXPENDITURES FOR MARIJUANA INVESTIGATION AND ERADICATION NATIONWIDE
2001	316,441	314,780	\$5.32 million
2002	464,667	356,596	\$5.30 million
2003	677,122	425,306	\$7.09 million
2004	663,304	540,925	\$7.42 million
2005	984,849	791,679	\$7.30 million
2006	1,221,410	1,059,542	\$10.40 million
2007	2,095,387	1,878,589	\$11.70 million
2008	3,306,244	2,663,344	\$15.10 million
2009	3,646,834	3,342,222	\$15.40 million
2010	3,101,910	2,673,129	\$15.90 million

Source: U.S. Forest Service

and started irrigation reservoirs. They spread fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides – even using banned toxic chemicals to enhance crop productivity. As a result, public drinking-water supplies can become polluted for hundreds of miles around major marijuana-growing sites, Perry says.

Cleanup is arduous and costly. Authorities hauled 33,000 pounds of trash, 101 propane tanks, more than 500 pounds of fertilizer and 33 miles of irrigation drip lines off illicit marijuana plantations in California's national parks and national forests in connection with Operation Trident, the massive July drug bust. Rehabilitating land damaged by marijuana farming soaks up millions of taxpayer dollars each year.

Law-enforcement encounters with growers can be dangerous. The Forest Service has a list of gunfire exchanges between growers and law enforcers dating back to 1996. Some officers have been wounded, but only growers have died in the confrontations. Concerns about violence are serious enough that 120 National Guard military police, who are not part of the counterdrug program, provided security for civilian law enforcement running roadblocks during Operation Trident.

Backcountry violence involving civilians is also rising as the number of illegal growing

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SEVEN STATES THAT DOMINATE DOMESTIC MARIJUANA FARMING RECEIVE THE MOST ATTENTION:

California, Hawaii, Kentucky, Oregon, Tennessee, Washington and West Virginia

operations increases. The past decade is particularly telling. In 2001, a father and son on a hunting excursion were wounded by growers' gunfire after wandering upon a marijuana plot in California's Eldorado National Forest. In 2005, three bear hunters ended up in a shootout with growers after stumbling upon a pot garden in Arizona's Tonto National Forest. In August, two Nevada outdoorsmen were threatened near a marijuana plot where three U.S. Bureau of Land Management workers had been held at gunpoint a year earlier. The list goes on.

Some of the violence may be occurring because marijuana growers are worried about retaliation from drug bosses if a citizen's discovery of a pot farm causes them to lose the entire crop, Spakowicz says.

Vital Effort. The National Guard has played a significant role in detecting and dismantling these illegal growing operations since the governor of Hawaii first asked for help with Operation Green Harvest in 1977. Other states followed that example, and 32 had similar programs by the time Congress authorized the National Guard Counterdrug Program in 1989.

Today, nearly 2,400 members of the Guard provide aerial reconnaissance, language skills, intelligence analysis, ground transportation and other assistance throughout the country, as well as in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories. Seven states that dominate domestic marijuana farming receive the most attention: California, Hawaii, Kentucky, Oregon, Tennessee, Washington and West Virginia.

"The National Guard is invaluable to us," says Spakowicz, echoing an opinion shared by most top law-enforcement officials in the Forest Service.

The Guard's many specialties include helping law enforcement analyze where marijuana is being grown on public lands. "It's been an intelligence-driven operation the last 10 years," says Col. William S. Carle, chief of the National Guard's Counterdrug Division. "It cuts down on the droning around in the air."

The Guard still averages 25,000 flying hours a year in support of drug-eradication work, but is only meeting part of the need. "The requests for assistance far exceed the Guard's capacity," Carle says. While the national forest pot-farming problem has gotten considerably worse, "our funding has flatlined." Some 1,600 positions with the Guard's Counterdrug Division have never been funded.

National Guard counterdrug efforts also involve helping law enforcement deal with the sophisticated methamphetamine and prescription-drug distribution network that drug-trafficking organizations are running. "It's not just about interdicting it at the border," Carle says. "Our job (also) is to help law enforcement in the 235 cities where Mexican cartels have active drug-trafficking organizations."

Counterdrug work helps members of the Guard sharpen skills they need in a combat zone, whether it's flying reconnaissance missions or working in partnership with local law enforcement. "They are going to take these skills to war," Carle says. "Nowadays, the terrorists we are fighting work the same way drug-trafficking organizations do."

Twenty percent of the Guard's effort goes toward demand-reduction programs, ranging from youth camps to teaching middle-schoolers how to make wise choices. When a young Guardsman who served in Iraq or Afghanistan gets in front of sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders, he gets their attention, Carle says. The Guard focuses on alternative schools, schools with gangs and schools with children from military families, among others. The program reached 165,000 students last year.

"Somebody needs to work on the demand side," Carle says. "We're the only ones in the military doing that nationally. We look at this as our responsibility. (Otherwise), who's going to be the Guardsmen in the future?" 🌿

Ken Olsen is a frequent contributor to The American Legion Magazine.

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MEMORIALS

'Not for his sake, *but for theirs*'

Blessed by the Great War's last living veteran, the D.C. War Memorial restoration is now well under way.

BY CHRISTOPHER LANCETTE

Frank Buckles nearly tumbled out of his wheelchair as he made his way along the crumbling stone walkway leading to the District of Columbia War Memorial on the National Mall in Washington. Algae had turned green the once-white dome of the memorial. Invasive plants had overtaken the open grove around it.

Buckles was one of a few who ever visited it. Little existed in the way of signs pointing tourists to the site, built by residents of the nation's capital in 1931 to honor the nearly 500 people from the district who lost their lives in World War I.

The last surviving U.S. veteran of the Great War, Buckles turned to a friend advocating for funding to restore the memorial and said, "Let's do it."

If the West Virginia resident, who turns 110 years old this month, made it back to the site today, he'd see that the memorial makeover is well under way. Last August, the National Park Service began a \$2.28 million restoration project – including new signs – scheduled to be completed in about a year (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided the funding). Buckles no longer does media interviews, but his daughter, Susannah Flanagan, knows exactly how he would react.

"He would say, 'It's about time! I'm glad they did something before it fell apart,'" Flanagan says. "Everyone but him has passed away, and he appreciates what the memorial stands for – not for his sake, but for theirs."

More good news may be on the way for Buckles and his daughter: a consensus bill introduced in the 111th Congress would have provided greater recognition for the D.C. War Memorial, while also enhancing the status of the Liberty Memorial and its museum in Kansas City, Mo. The compromise among a range of supporters of each site, both

seeking national stature, would have designated both as "national" memorials. The D.C. War Memorial would have become the District of Columbia and National World War I Memorial, and the Kansas City destinations would have been known as the National World War I Memorial and Museum.

"The millions of Americans who served their country bravely in World War I deserve to be recognized for their sacrifice," says co-sponsor Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo. "The proposed compromise, with bipartisan support from all sides of the issue, would provide World War I veterans with a fitting tribute – both in Kansas City with a national memorial and museum at the Liberty Memorial, which has long stood with the grandeur and stature of a memorial that honors all World War I vets, and also by expanding the meaning of the District of Columbia World War I memorial on the Mall to give it a national scope befitting of its location in our nation's capital and acknowledging the fact that all World War I vets should be honored alongside veterans of our other great wars." McCaskill and her co-sponsors "remain committed" to getting the bill passed in the 112th Congress.

The American Legion's National Executive Committee passed a resolution in October endorsing legislation that unites several different bills relating to the memorials in each city.

"This is a good compromise," says Jack Querfeld, the Legion's director of Internal Affairs. "We believe the increased recognition will mean that more people visiting the Mall in Washington will see the D.C. memorial, and that a lot of people will travel to the heartland in Missouri to see the memorial and monument there."

The bill would have also established a commission of 24 members to ensure a proper observance of the World War I centennial in 2014. The

president, the Senate, the House, The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Liberty Memorial Association could each appoint members to the body.

The key to passing any good piece of legislation, though, always rests with developing a strong coalition – something that past Department of the District of Columbia Commander Thomas Kouyeas called for in a 2008 story in *The American Legion Magazine*. Attorney Edwin Fountain was one of many people who sought to add muscle to the effort, helping to form the World War I Memorial Foundation. It advocates for D.C. War Memorial restoration funding and greater recognition for the site, and endorses the compromise.

“It’s unconventional to have two national memorials, but there’s no reason why this can’t be done,” says Fountain, who currently serves on the foundation’s board of directors. “These memorials are very important. A lot of people don’t realize that more Americans died in World War I than in Korea and Vietnam combined, but those wars have a greater place in our national consciousness. You can’t understand those wars or really understand the history of the 20th century without understanding World War I.”

President Calvin Coolidge had even higher hopes for such recognition when he dedicated the Liberty Memorial on Armistice Day in 1926.

“It has not been raised to commemorate war and victory, but rather the results of war and victory, which are embodied in peace and liberty,” he said in a speech that mentioned his being on hand five years earlier when the Legion’s convention participated in groundbreaking ceremonies. “In its impressive symbolism, it



Ron Chapple

pictures the story of that one increasing purpose declared by the poet to mark all the forces of the past which finally converge in the spirit of America in order that our country as ‘the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time,’ may forever hold aloft the glowing hope of progress and peace to all humanity.”

The prospect for peace is also very much on Susannah Flanagan’s mind as she reflects on what memorials to her father’s war mean to her.

“These memorials are places where people walk around and learn history,” she says. “As people are remembering these things and remembering the fallen, I would hope we learn to avoid repeating the mistakes that lead to wars.”

Keep track of the latest developments on the D.C. War Memorial at the World War I Memorial Foundation:

 www.wwimemorial.org

Read The American Legion’s resolution supporting the national legislation:

 www.legion.org/documents/resolutions/2010F015.pdf

Christopher Lancette is a Washington-area freelance writer who often writes about U.S. history. Read more at his blog site, dcreflections.typepad.com.

[VERBATIM]

“In case the enemy attacks our territory and people again, we will thoroughly retaliate to ensure that the enemy cannot provoke again.”

Kim Kwan-jin, presidential nominee for defense minister of South Korea, after North Korea shelled the island of Yeonpyeong on Nov. 23, killing four people



“We paid someone \$50 to hold our spot while we went and had Thanksgiving.”

Kahdysja Semien of California, on her strategy for getting the most out of Black Friday shopping. By 2 a.m., she was back in line.

“If indeed it is the case, as alleged by the Pentagon, that the young soldier – Bradley Manning – is behind some of our recent disclosures, then he is without doubt an unparalleled hero.”

Julian Assange, founder of WikiLeaks

“If you have an 18- or 19-year-old over there, you want to get your hands on this private first class yourself. I know I do.”

Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Mich., advocating a potential charge of capital treason for Manning

“We can’t just leave it up to the parents.”

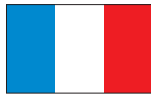
First Lady Michelle Obama, at the signing of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, a law that will subsidize and regulate what children eat before, during and after school in federally funded school-based meal programs

Sources: AP, NPR, The Guardian, CBS, Fox News

[FOREIGN AFFAIRS]

Bans, fines and jail time

How other countries are tackling the challenge of illegal immigration



France

According to Fragomen, an international law firm specializing in immigration, “a foreign national entering or living in France without complying with appropriate work and residency authorization is subject to imprisonment for up to one year and/or a fine of €3,750 (\$5,227). He or she may also be prohibited from entering France for a maximum period of three years.”

In addition, those who assist illegal immigrants “are subject to a more severe punishment of imprisonment of up to five years and/or a fine up to €30,000 (\$41,823).” France has been deadly serious about illegal immigration in recent years, drawing the ire of its European Union neighbors for rounding up and deporting thousands of so-called Roma immigrants, also known as Gypsies. In 2009, 10,000 Roma were deported.



Italy

In 2010, Italy approved a tough set of laws to curb illegal immigration. Under the new laws, as the BBC reports, persons guilty of illegally entering the country can be fined up to €10,000 (\$13,941) and detained for up to six months. Those who knowingly shelter illegal immigrants can face up to three years in prison. The law also empowers citizens’ patrols to police entry zones. Finally, it requires parents to produce documents proving they are legal residents when registering the births of their children.



People’s Republic of China

Those who fail to comply with China’s immigration laws are detained and then expelled from China, according to Fragomen. In response to a recent surge in undocumented workers from Vietnam, China has set up detention houses near the border. According to the newspaper *China Daily*, border police arrested 1,820 illegal immigrants, intercepted 4,839 at the border and deported 2,218 – all in the first four months of 2010.



Saudi Arabia

“Individuals who violate Saudi immigration laws may be subject to severe fines,” Fragomen reports. Other likely punishments include detention, deportation at the expense of the guilty party or his employer, imprisonment, and/or a ban from re-entry into the country.



Mexico

Michael Waller of the Center for Security Policy reports that Mexico’s immigration laws are much stricter than U.S. immigration laws. According to Waller, the Mexican constitution bans immigrants and foreign visitors from public political discourse, bars immigrants and naturalized citizens from most public-service positions, authorizes private citizens to arrest illegal immigrants and turn them over to the authorities, and allows the government to expel immigrants for any reason and without due process.

In addition, Waller reports that foreigners are admitted only after proving they have “the necessary funds for their sustenance” and only if their presence does not disturb “the equilibrium of the national demographics.”

According to Fragomen, “Employers that violate Mexican immigration laws are subject to fines of up to 100 times the minimum wage ... Foreign nationals who violate the terms of their stay in Mexico are subject to deportation.”

[FOREIGN AFFAIRS]

Basra boomtown

Basra, once a hotbed of militia activity, has become an Iraqi boomtown thanks to oil development in the region, *The Wall Street Journal* reports.

- Eleven new investment licenses worth \$500 million have gone to foreign and domestic firms.
- Iraq has earmarked \$1.4 billion to build four new oil-export terminals and pipelines to increase output and shipping capacity.
- A consortium of international firms has raised daily oil output in the Basra fields to 1.1 million barrels.
- Iraq has raised its estimated reserve levels to 143 billion barrels, up from 115 billion.

In light of the successes in and around Basra, according to the report, Iraq hopes to boost "output capacity from the current 2.5 million barrels a day to 12 million barrels a day in less than a decade. That would be a feat unrivaled in the history of the modern oil era."



AP

[MILITARY AFFAIRS]

UN vs. UAVs

Officials at the United Nations are calling for the creation of a special panel to examine "the ethics and legality of unmanned military weapons," *The Washington Post* reports.

"The international community urgently needs to address the legal, political, ethical and moral implications of the development of lethal robotic technologies," says Christof Heyns, a U.N. official specializing in the investigation of extrajudicial executions. With an obvious, if tacit, nod to the U.S. use of drones in Afghanistan, Heyns says the United Nations should address "the fundamental question of whether lethal force should ever be permitted to be fully automated."



U.S. Air Force

[CONGRESS]

Veteran lawmakers

All of the ballots have been counted, and the freshman class of the 112th Congress, which was sworn in last month, includes 25 military veterans. Twenty-two serve in the House, and three in the Senate.



Media Bakery

[WAR ON TERROR]

Major troop-contributing nations in Afghanistan

Afghan National Army	138,200
Afghan National Police	120,500
United States	90,000
Britain	9,500
Germany	4,388
France	3,750
Italy	3,300
Canada	2,922
Poland	2,417
Turkey	1,790
Romania	1,648
Australia	1,550
Spain	1,537
Georgia	925

Source: NATO/ISAF



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[HISTORY]

'Impact on the World' – Reagan's legacy honored



The National Archives

This month marks the 100th anniversary of President Ronald Reagan's birthday, and throughout the year organizations will remember and honor the 40th president.

As *The Los Angeles Times* reports, an effort is under way to name a Nevada mountain range after Reagan. A Reagan-themed float was part of the Rose Parade on Jan. 1. Reagan's hometown of Dixon, Ill., has commissioned an original piece of music, the "Reagan Suite." Eureka College, Reagan's alma mater, has launched a program focusing on his Midwestern roots. The school has also created a Reagan Centennial Speaker Series. The University of Virginia is hosting a program on Reagan's "Impact on the World." In London, a statue of Reagan will be unveiled.

The Reagan Centennial is supported by a bipartisan commission charged with identifying ways to celebrate Reagan's legacy. In keeping with his philosophy, none of the celebrations or programs will spend federal tax dollars.

 www.reagancentennial.com

[ORATORICAL]

Legion, National Forensic League team up

With nearly 160 successful years of speech and debate competitions between them, The American Legion and the National Forensic League (NFL) have agreed to join forces to provide additional opportunities for students interested in forensic arts.

The NFL annually conducts tournaments in debate, public speaking and interpretation for more than 112,000 high-school students representing 2,800 U.S. schools. Because of the NFL's network of school contacts and well-known speech and debate activities, the Legion is confident the partnership will help the Oratorical Contest gain exposure among teachers and students.

American Legion department Oratorical chairmen will work closely with the NFL's 106 district representatives to encourage students to participate in the program. Also, the top three finishers in the National Oratorical Contest will earn a berth in "Original Oration," a category in the NFL's National Speech and Debate Tournament in Dallas from June 13-18. There, the champions will present 10-minute speeches on topics of their choice and compete for more than \$200,000 in college scholarships.

"Both organizations have a long history of providing wonderful, profound educational opportunities for young people," said Adam Jacobi, the NFL's education and programs coordinator. "We questioned why we haven't been doing this all along, since both programs are complementary and the cross-pollination between the NFL and The American Legion is going to strengthen kids' communication."

 www.nflonline.org



[MEMBERSHIP]

New PUFL members receive challenge coins

The American Legion has launched a campaign to increase the number of Paid Up For Life members, issuing challenge coins to those participating in the PUFL program.

When new PUFL members receive the challenge coin in the mail, they'll also get a letter from National Commander Jimmie Foster thanking them – and challenging them to recruit another new PUFL member. Once a new PUFL membership is paid, either in full or through the 36-month payment-plan option, a packet is mailed to the member that includes a PUFL membership card and a PUFL lapel/cap pin.

Legionnaires who recruit 10 new PUFL members will receive a polo shirt and a certificate. Those who recruit 25 new PUFL members will receive a master PUFL recruiter Legion cap. The overall top PUFL recruiter will receive an all-expense-paid trip to the 93rd National Convention in Minneapolis, where he or she will be recognized on stage.

The six departments with the highest PUFL totals will be recognized. Winners will receive \$1,000, and the department commanders will be recognized during the convention.

To download a PUFL application or recruiter form:

 www.legion.org/join/pufl

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[TROOP SUPPORT]

'It's the least I can do'

Actor Gary Sinise gives his time and talents to entertain wounded warriors.

BY STEVE B. BROOKS

He's perhaps best known for his Oscar-nominated role as Lt. Dan Taylor – the man with “magic legs” – in “Forrest Gump.” He has received acclaim for supporting roles in “Ransom,” “Apollo 13” and “The Green Mile.” He's also the star of TV's “CSI: New York.”

But since 2003, Gary Sinise and his Lt. Dan Band have entertained U.S. servicemembers and their families throughout the world, performing on many USO tours. Sinise also visits military hospitals, greeting wounded servicemembers and their families. On Dec. 12, he and his Lt. Dan Band performed at the welcome reception for Road to Recovery – an event sponsored by The American Legion and the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes – at Walt Disney World's Swan Resort in Florida.

Prior to an afternoon sound check, Sinise talked to The American Legion about his support of the U.S. military.

Q: You've played at five Road to Recovery events. How did you first get involved?

A: I got involved in 2004 when the Coalition was just getting started, and that was just a couple years after I started to actively support our military and our veterans. I had been involved with Vietnam veterans groups prior to that, but after Sept. 11, when we started deploying our troops to Afghanistan and Iraq, I just wanted to pitch in and help. Various folks would approach me all the time, asking me to come and support something they were doing or getting started. At the first conference, somebody who knew me and knew what I was doing contacted me.

Q: What keeps you coming back year after year?

A: They're doing good stuff for our wounded heroes. I just want to help them do more. I don't do all that much throughout the year, but I donate my band for the conference and do various PSAs to help them promote what they're doing.

Q: Why is the Lt. Dan Band's mission important to you?

A: The band is part of a broader mission to do what I can to help keep these servicemembers and their families strong in difficult times for our country. It's very clear, if you're paying attention, that it's a very dangerous world, and it does not look like it's going to get less dangerous as time goes on. So we're going to continue to call on our defenders to do difficult and dangerous work around the world to prevent another very serious attack on our homeland. You saw on Sept. 11 what 19 men with box cutters could do. These defenders are out there, around the world, to make sure it doesn't happen again. They are serving and sacrificing, and their families are going through very difficult times. I value the freedom I have in this country, and that freedom has



Actor Gary Sinise brings children on stage while performing with the Lt. Dan Band at the sixth annual Road to Recovery Conference & Tribute at Walt Disney World's Swan Resort.

Molly Dempsey

been paid for by others. It's the least I can do to go out there and visit the hospitals – entertain them here and abroad, lift their morale. That's one way I can give back.

Q: Visiting hospitals, you've talked one-on-one with wounded troops. What was your impression of them?

A: What makes somebody want to go to war, to join the military, especially in a time when they know there's a 95-percent chance they're going to be deployed to someplace dangerous? Those are special individuals, and we're lucky to have them. We have over 300 million people in our country, and it's like 0.5 percent of the population actually defends our country in military service. You need these folks, and I've met thousands of them over the years. It's always humbling and impressive.

Q: Regardless of political views or stances on the war, does the American public have a responsibility to support its servicemembers?

A: Sure. Is there a president in the past 100 years who hasn't had to deploy our military somewhere? No. Every one of them has had to face some serious threat. We all like to say, “Hey, let's just hope military conflict away. Let's just wish it all away.” Sometimes we have to face the reality that military deployment is the only thing to do. We who benefit from the freedom that we have and from the defenders who are on the front lines owe it to these folks to try to at least show our gratitude and our appreciation.

Q: What's coming up for the Lt. Dan Band?

A: Right now we have almost 20 shows set up between February and May, and probably 12 of those are for the troops somewhere. I'm on my television show, but I try to fit in as many weekend shows on bases as I can. I've played so many concerts that I can't say the number of them anymore.

Steve B. Brooks is multimedia editor for The American Legion.

Financial Footlocker: Send us your questions

J.J.: Thanks to the exciting new relationship between The American Legion and USAA, June and I now have the opportunity to answer your personal-finance questions online at www.legion.org and each month in *The American Legion Magazine*.

Before we get to that, we thought we'd use this opportunity to briefly introduce ourselves. Ladies usually go first, but I'll take my shot and then turn it over to June.

I'm Joseph Montanaro Jr. – "J.J." – and have been a certified financial planner at USAA for the past eight years. I'm a native of Kansas City and the son of a Navy pilot. I graduated from the U.S. Military Academy and spent five years on active duty. I was excited to join the financial-services industry in 1993 while continuing to serve in the Army Reserve. In 2005, I deployed to Afghanistan, and in 2009 I retired as a lieutenant colonel.

As a married father of three and a student of history, I've got a lot to share. Through the years, I've helped hundreds of individuals and families get a handle on their finances. I continue to work with USAA members on a daily basis and am always encouraging folks to make sound financial decisions.

June: I'm June Walbert. I'm not your average financial planner – not to say that J.J. is, but I've done everything from training folks as a firearms instructor to teaching clients about options strategies as a stockbroker before taking my spot as a financial planner at USAA. As a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserve, I've served in a variety of roles, from Oklahoma City to Kuwait and currently in Japan. While I continue to work with USAA members, I get the biggest kick out of trumpeting smart finances to large audiences, whether it's CNN, Fox News, *The Wall Street Journal* or in the Legion's own "Magazine for a

Strong America." You should also know that I have a special place in my heart for dogs and spend a lot of time volunteering at the Animal Defense League. So mention your furry friend, and you'll get extra-special care from me.

Whether it's how to tackle your debt dilemma or ramping up for retirement, we look forward to putting our combined 31 years of financial experience to work for you who have served our great nation so proudly. We'd love to hear from you, so submit your questions online at www.legion.org/financialfootlocker.

FINANCIAL FOOTLOCKER



WITH JUNE WALBERT
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Valor Studios / Matt Hall

'In the Company of Heroes'

"In the Company of Heroes" is a painting rooted in more than just visual artist Matt Hall's masterful creativity – the event portrayed actually happened.

In December 2004, Valor Studios, an art and magazine publisher, funded a charitable trip to bring six veterans of Easy Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division – the famed "Band of Brothers" – to Germany to meet 1st Armored Division troops who had recently returned from Iraq.

On the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, the group traveled to Bastogne to revisit the veterans' old foxholes with their younger counterparts. But on the way to Bastogne, the tour's host had arranged for the veterans to

visit Luxembourg American Cemetery, where their fallen comrades are buried. "In the Company of Heroes" depicts the hallowed moment.

Walking through a sea of crosses and Stars of David, the veterans came to the headstones of their buddies to pay tribute. They later agreed that it was their most poignant gathering since they left Europe in 1945.

Upon returning from the trip, the veterans were eager to have their experience commemorated in a painting, and Matt Hall – a frequent illustrator for *The American Legion Magazine* – was commissioned.

For more information, contact Valor Studios at (570) 435-4523 or online at www.valorstudios.com.

[EDUCATION]

Legion wins fight for Post-9/11 GI Bill fixes

A concentrated lobbying effort by The American Legion and other veterans service organizations led to Senate passage of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010 on Dec. 13. The legislation calls for expansion and improvement of federal college benefits for veterans who served in the U.S. military on or after 9/11. A House vote on a similar measure was expected to follow.

"This is great news," American Legion National Commander Jimmie Foster said. "This bill rectifies the inequities and shortcomings of the well-intentioned but incomplete Post-9/11 GI Bill, and makes it whole."

The new bill would add financial assistance for veterans pursuing vocational training and those in distance-learning programs. Under the 2008 bill, federal financial assistance is available only to veterans attending degree-granting colleges and universities. Benefits would also extend to include certain members of the National Guard and reserves

who did not qualify for college aid under the earlier version. Under the improvements act, students would also receive an annual textbook allowance.

Bob Madden, assistant director of the Legion's Economic Division, testified before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee in July and strongly urged support for many of the provisions that were ultimately included in the new measure. Foster emphasized the importance of the "fix-it" bill during his testimony before a joint session of Congress shortly after he took office in September, saying, "The American Legion urges enhancement to the Post-9/11 GI Bill that would give veterans a more robust educational benefit."



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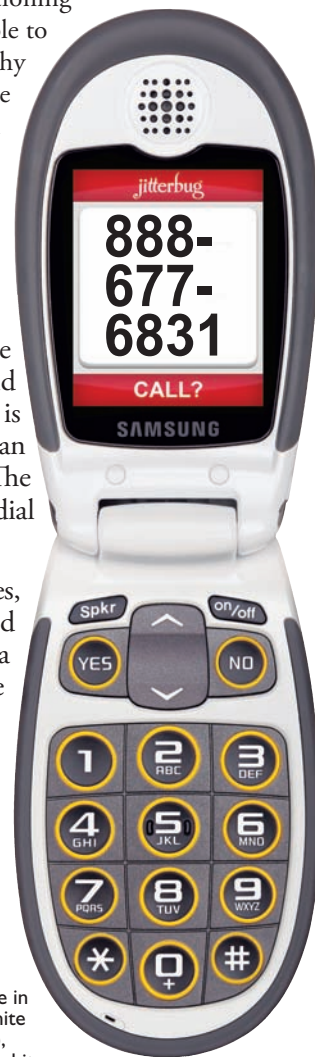
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[YOUTH SUPPORT]

Child Welfare Foundation awards \$666,670 for 2011

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation has announced its grant recipients for 2011, awarding \$666,670 to 21 nonprofit organizations. Approved during the CWF's annual board of directors meeting in Indianapolis on Oct. 10, the grants will support projects that benefit the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of children.

The 2011 grant recipients include:

- American Academy of Pediatrics of Elk Grove Village, Ill., received \$14,725 to produce a supplement to the *Pediatrics* journal to provide pediatricians with an overview of the role of the pediatrician in military medicine. Sons of The American Legion sponsored this grant.
- Child Find of America, Inc., of Highland, N.Y., received \$45,000 to produce and disseminate outreach materials targeted to U.S. military dads and moms. American Legion Auxiliary sponsored this grant.
- Kansas Braille Transcription Institute of Wichita, Kan., received \$6,500 to distribute 1,000 education packets on the tactile/Braille U.S. flag to blind students nationwide via the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children. American Legion Auxiliary and SAL sponsored this grant.
- Our Military Kids of McLean, Va., received \$50,100 to create video and information brochures for prospective grantee families and donors. American Legion Auxiliary and SAL sponsored this grant.
- The American Legion of Fultondale, Ala., received \$12,000 to purchase copies of "The Crippled Lamb" for pediatric units in Alabama hospitals. SAL sponsored this grant.
- Young Marines of Washington received \$40,808 to expand its drug-demand reduction-program kits to youths in more than 300 communities.

For more information on CWF or how to donate:

 www.cwf-inc.org

Image Source

[EDUCATION]

Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits not taxable



Q: *I currently attend the University of Wyoming. I have been receiving the Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits, and was wondering if they are taxable.*

A: No, any veterans benefit paid under any law administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs should not be reported as income to the Internal Revenue Service.

Per IRS Publication 970, "Payments you receive for education, training, or subsistence under any law administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs

(VA) are tax free. Do not include these payments as income on your federal tax return."

Valerie Vigil, a Marine Corps veteran and member of American Legion Post 27 in Arizona, is a past vice president of the National Association of Veterans' Programs Administrators. Send GI Bill questions to her by e-mail. askvalerie@legion.org

[STATEMENT]

"By resolution, our membership is opposed to illegal immigration into this country. We don't understand why so many members of Congress feel compelled to provide for amnesty for a portion of illegal immigrants before securing our borders and tackling the broken immigration system.

"Our states and communities are struggling to meet the needs of tomorrow's generation, forcing increased tuitions and fees on those already attending. So why is Congress putting even more pressure on the universities and colleges by pushing these children into our already crowded classrooms?

"Action upon the DREAM Act, a stopgap piece of legislation that deals with one symptom of the problem, doesn't address the underlying issues such as employment, pathways to citizenship, and securing the borders."

American Legion National Commander Jimmie Foster, on the DREAM Act of 2010, which passed the House of Representatives on Dec. 8 but was blocked in the Senate. The bill would grant "conditional non-immigrant status" to those who entered the United States illegally before their 16th birthday and have been here at least five years. To qualify for the bill's provisions, they would also need to have a high-school diploma, be enrolled in a college or university, or be a servicemember for at least two years.

[MEMBERSHIP]

NEW POSTS

Post 80, Trout Lake, Minn.

Chartered Nov. 23 (16 members)

Post 138, Scottsdale, Ariz.

Chartered Nov. 10 (19 members)

Smith Mountain Lake Post 62, Moneta, Va. Chartered Oct. 22 (18 members)

Snead Memorial Post 818, Snead, Ala. Chartered Oct. 18 (27 members)

[ECONOMICS]

Debt clock

As of mid-December, the global public debt was more than \$40 trillion. The U.S. share was \$1.26 trillion.

 www.economist.com/content/global_debt_clock

Media Bakery

[ECONOMICS]

Free evaluation for veteran business owners

Business owners have several responsibilities this month, including tax filings and planning this year's business-growth strategy.

Gathering your quarterly deposits,

expenditures, sales and revenue data, and compiling deductions, will take a lot of time – time you need to work on developing new sales.



Fortunately, veterans can get a free business evaluation that will help them achieve success in 2011. This evaluation will take a business' snapshot, and compare it to industry standards as well as to similar businesses in the local area. Also, it will help veterans determine where they need to put more emphasis, and where they might put less. Such evaluations are essential to business growth and can save thousands of dollars over the course of the year. This service is being donated to veterans free of charge. Those interested in participating should contact me by e-mail (see below).

Also, there are changes this year regarding deductions. Take full advantage of deductions to which you are entitled, and plan accordingly for the purchase of products and/or services that may no longer qualify for deductions.

If you are self-employed, know that the IRS counts you as a small business. You will need to file a Schedule C or Schedule C-EZ to properly account for your income. Taxes are complicated: don't try to do them on your own. Visit www.irs.gov/businesses, start working with your bookkeeper and accountant now, and if you have questions, ask them early.

Louis J. Celli Jr. is CEO of the Veterans Business Resource Center. Readers can send questions for "On Point" to lcelli@nevbrc.org.

[TROOP SUPPORT]

BLUE STAR SPEED

The Brownsburg, Ind.-based Alliance Motorsports team will again display the Blue Star Banner on its 24 car for the 2011 Firestone Indy Lights Series racing season. Called the "Fast Track to Indy," the series includes 11 oval, road and street events, including the Firestone Freedom 100 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway on May 27.

www.indycar.com/fil/



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How to submit a reunion

The American Legion Magazine publishes reunion notices for veterans. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine**, Attn: Reunions, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206, fax (317) 630-1280, e-mail reunions@legion.org or submit information via our Web site, www.legion.org/veterans/reunions.

Include the branch of service and complete name of the group, no abbreviations, with your request. The listing also should include the reunion dates and city, along with a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Listings are publicized free of charge.

Your notice will appear on our Web site within a week and will remain available online until the final day of your reunion. Upon submission, please allow three months for your reunion to be published in print. **Due to the large number of reunions, The American Legion Magazine**

will publish a group's listing only once a year. Notices should be sent at least six months prior to the reunion to ensure timely publication.

Other notices

"In Search Of" is a means of getting in touch with people from your unit to plan a reunion. **We do not publish listings that seek people for interviews, research purposes, military photos or help in filing a VA claim.** Listings must include the name of the unit from which you seek people, the time period and the location, as well as a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine**, Attn: "In Search Of," P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206, fax (317) 630-1280 or e-mail reunions@legion.org.

The magazine will not publish names of individuals, only the name of the unit. Listings are published free of charge.

Life Membership notices are published for Legionnaires who have been awarded life mem-

berships by their posts. **This does not include a member's own Paid-Up-For-Life membership.** Notices must be submitted on official forms, which may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to **The American Legion Magazine**, Attn: Life Memberships, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

"Comrades in Distress" listings must be approved by the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation division. If you are seeking to verify an injury received during service, contact your Legion department service officer for information on how to publish a notice.

To respond to a "Comrades in Distress" listing, send a letter to **The American Legion Magazine**, Attn: **Comrades in Distress**, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206. Include the listing's CID number in your response.

"Taps" notices are published only for Legionnaires who served as department commanders or national officers.

AIR FORCE / ARMY AIR FORCES

1st Flt Det (Nha Trang AB, Vietnam), Las Vegas, 4/11-15, Roger Gibson, (228) 209-1180, rgibson2403@aol.com; **22nd TCS (Tachikawa, Japan) & 22nd MAS**, Biloxi, MS, 5/10-12, Henry Trujillo, (719) 545-4156, alute@comcast.net; **67th Tact Recon Wing (All Units)**, Lancaster, PA, 5/9-13, Holly Faux, (570) 698-5543, fauxhr@gmail.com; **444th Ftr Interceptor**, Charleston, SC, 4/18-21, Wallace Mitchell, (803) 464-6806; **502nd Tact Cont Grp 605th, 606th, 607th & 608th AC&W Sqdns (Korea)**, Biloxi, MS, 4/30-5/4, Bill Aylward, (703) 715-0448, waylward1@verizon.net; **601st, 615th Aircraft Cont & Warning Sqdns (Germany)**, Biloxi, MS, 5/1-6, Francis Gosselin, (352) 588-9295, fgosselin@tampabay.rr.com; **6911th Electronic Security Sqdn Metro Tango (Hahn AFB, 1980)**, Colorado Springs, CO, 6/16-19, Cherish Shinnars, (828) 256-6008, mreunion@hotmail.com; **AF Public Affairs Alumni Assn**, Fairfield, CA, 5/12-14, John Terino, (703) 239-2704, johnterino@afpaaa.org; **Navigator Observer Assn**, Las Vegas, 9/6-9, Jimmy Bannerman, (386) 257-3853, jimmiebannerman@cfl.rr.com

ARMY

2nd Bn 34th Armd "The Dreadnaughts," (Vietnam, 1966-1970), Nashville, TN, 5/26-29, Rick Welch, (615) 491-9585, richardwelch513@comcast.net; **2nd Inf Div Assn**, St. Louis, 8/25-29, Bob Haynes, (224) 225-1202, 2idahq@comcast.net; **4th Bn 39th Inf 9th Inf Div (Fort Riley, KS & Vietnam, 1966-1967)**, Salt Lake City, 6/23-25, Jim Haines, (303) 809-1815, lzbearcat67@live.com; **6/502nd Inf Berlin Bde (1989-1996)**, Atlanta, 6/9-12, Stefan Morgan, (828) 256-6008, berlinbrigadereunion@gmail.com; **73rd Tank Bn & 73rd Armd**, Pigeon Forge, TN, 5/11-15, Curtis Banker, (518) 643-2302, dmbanker-curtis@northnet.org; **86th Chem Mortar Bn Assn**, Nashville, 5/4-8, George Murray, (256) 820-4415; **99th Sig Bn C Co**, Gainesville, TX, 4/15-17, Vincent Luciano, (520) 326-3745; **101st Abn Div**, Lexington, KY, 8/17-20, Dee Dallas, (931) 431-0199, 101texec@comcast.net; **109th MP Co (Frankfurt, Germany)**, Tucson, AZ, 4/28-5/1, Rob Feters, (602) 405-3182, rogerdiditagain@yahoo.com; **371st Inf Rgt 93rd Div (WWII)**, Columbia, SC, 8/26-29, Sonya Hodges, (803) 556-2643, sonyagratham@yahoo.com; **585th Eng Co (Vietnam)**, San Antonio, 5/1-4, Tom Garney, (480) 982-7114; **591st Eng Co LE Vets Assn**, Branson, MO, 7/10-14, Ken Kiel, (414) 529-7731, kccnonst@wi.rr.com; **629th Ord Supply Parts (Qui Nhon, Vietnam)**, San Antonio, 6/9-12, Gary Matthews, (712) 485-2422, gmat41347@aol.com; **8605th AAU 5th ASA FS, Det 5, 2nd Sig Svc Bn**, Jacksonville, FL, 4/7-10, Dick Dixon, (601) 485-7567; **Mid-Atlantic Chpt 11th Abn Div Assn, 11th Air Assault Div 7, 187th Abn Rgt Cbt Team (ARCT)**, Myrtle Beach, SC, 2/2-3/2, Herbert Shapiro, (410) 827-6410, hshap@atlanticbb.net; **Plt 1108 "Hoosier Plt" (San Diego)**,

Spencer, IN, 6/4-5, Steve Haisley, (847) 367-8927, shaisley@aol.com; **QM OCS 66-16 Graduating Class**, Prince George, VA, 7/19-21, Ron Demery, (417) 317-2670, ronndem@yahoo.com; **Sig C OCS Assn**, Washington, 10/13-16, Robert Kerns, (615) 391-0867, rkerns99@bellsouth.net

COAST GUARD

USCGC Eastwind W 279, South Portland, ME, 6/16-19, LeRoy Grant, (603) 447-6040, junelee1@roadrunner.com

JOINT

Palau CVE 122 & USMC Air Sqdn, Myrtle Beach, SC, 5/1-4, Harry Weldy, (410) 658-6043, hweldy@zoominternet.net; **Udorn Royal Thai AFB, Thailand**, Mount Pleasant, MI, 7/24-26, Jerry Long, (817) 594-4623, long_jerry@sbcglobal.net

MARINES

1st Warrant Officer Class, Biloxi, MS, 3/7-11, Charles Long, (321) 633-6178, clong98@cfl.rr.com; **Honor Plt 141 (MCRD San Diego, 1967)**, Washington, 11/10-12, Jay Grams, (616) 291-9023, jgrams1@aol.com; **Kilo Co 3rd Bn 7th Mar Rgt (Vietnam)**, Appleton, WI, 8/4-7, William Rolke, (262) 780-0993, k37usmc@att.net; **Old Glory Plt 350 (MCRD Colorado, 1960)**, Colorado Springs, CO, 6/14-16, William Smith, (719) 930-5651, mauibill@earthlink.net; **Vietnam Tankers & Ontos**, San Diego, 8/17-21, John Wear, (215) 794-9052, usmcvtga@comcast.net; **VMA(AW) 225 (Da Nang, Vietnam, 1969-1970)**, Washington, 5/19-22, Tim Murphy, (703) 980-3878, timurf@comcast.net

NAVY

Boston CA 69, CAG 1 & SSN 703, Chicago, 7/14-17, Art Herbert, (603) 672-8772, secretary@ussboston.org; **Boyd DD 544**, Seattle, 5/27-30, Charles St. John, (409) 656-5217, salorman41@hotmail.com; **Brownson DD 868**, Plymouth Meeting, PA, 5/19-23, Joseph Eliff, (610) 948-6475, josepheliff@ussbrownson.com; **Carpenter DD 825**, Warwick, RI, 4/28-5/2, Joel Weinbaum, (256) 351-8552, smokycolors@yahoo.com; **CHB 6**, Pocono Manor, PA, 8/26-28, M. McWeeney, (215) 393-1315, chb.sixreunion@gmail.com; **Davidson DE/FF 1045 (All Crews)**, Charleston, SC, 8/4-6, Dan Kroeger, (400) 944-9498, dk_1045@yahoo.com; **Donner LSD 20**, Nashville, TN, 4/28-5/1, Dennis Heimbach, (610) 775-7539, dheimb@lusa.com; **Gen. W.A. Mann**, Mobile, AL, 4/28-30, Walter Baker, (850) 934-1671, resjoy@cox.net; **Goodrich DDR 831**, Cherry Hill, NJ, 5/18-22, Dick Beyers, (805) 583-1274, richardbeyers@sbcglobal.net; **Gridley**, Branson, MO, 5/15-19, Nolan Flachs, (417) 877-8959, pamb@bransonmilitaryreunions.com; **Jenkins DD 447/DDE 447**, Akron, OH, 5/18-22, William L. Curtis, (812) 345-9971, bmcurtis@verizon.net; **Kalinin Bay (CVE 68) VC-3**, Grapevine, TX, 6/2-6, Hank Sawicki, (706) 391-4847, hankjsaw@aol.com; **Knudson APD 101**, Port Canaveral, FL, 5/20-23,

Wayne Reynolds, (386) 789-8612, wjr502@cfl.rr.com; **Lawrence Assn DDG 4 & DD 250**, Jacksonville, FL, 6/21-26, Craig Bernat, (814) 322-4150, dguts@usslawrence.com; **LSM/RS 188-199**, Savannah, GA, 4/14-17, Paul Ray, (423) 282-8531, raylsmr197@juno.com; **Manatee AO 58**, Phoenix, 5/5-7, James Osenton, (623) 772-8402, jopc1170@cox.net; **Mullinnix DD 944**, Albany, NY, 4/27-5/1, Bob Houghton, (302) 650-3042, muxassn@hotmail.com; **Nehenta Bay CVE 74 & Shamrock Bay CVE 84**, Colorado Springs, CO, 6/16-18, Stew Wasoba, (727) 397-4871; **NMBC 62 & PWD Edzell**, Scotland, Hampton, VA, 2/24-27, Norm Hahn, (715) 834-4780, nhahnjr@sbcglobal.net; **NMBC 128**, Chicago, 8/18-21, John York, (630) 378-1052, sargejohn@comcast.net; **Repose Annex Long Beach Nav Hosp**, Las Vegas, 2/22-24, Duane Van Hemert, (515) 564-9070, duvanh@mchsi.com; **Richard L. Page DEG/FFG 5**, St. Louis, 5/19-22, Carl Slack, (603) 986-4661, pagedegffg5@yahoo.com; **Robert H. McCard DD 822**, Nashville, TN, 5/11-15, Ben Plante, (603) 622-0244, blplante@comcast.net; **Sam Rayburn SSBN 635**, Reno, NV, 6/12-16, Darrell Rushing, (325) 468-2213, boatdock635@aol.com; **Sample DE/FF 1048**, Las Vegas, 6/2-5, Donald Moore, (702) 771-0606, nachomoms@yahoo.com; **Silversides SSN 679**, Muskegon, MI, 7/29-31, Dave Burgwald, (612) 866-2583, burgiel400@aol.com; **Spinax SS/SSR 489**, Branson, MO, 8/29-9/2, Jerry Cartwright, (405) 692-5380, moondauggy@sbcglobal.net; **Sterett DD 27/DDC/DLG 31/CAG 31/DDG 104**, Biloxi, MS, 5/20-22, Steve Hayes, shayes@cablone.net; **Trumpetfish SS 425**, Branson, MO, 8/23-29, Terry Trump, (843) 873-9563, ss425@hotmail.com; **Wasp CV/CVA/CVS 18 Assn (1943-1972)**, Charleston, SC, 4/29-5/4, Richard VanOver, (716) 649-9053

LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

Post 36, ND: Steve C. Frojen
Post 176, VA: Kenneth P. Hanson

IN SEARCH OF

2nd Bn E Co 1303rd Eng (Mainz, Germany, 1945), Norm Rasmusson, (419) 874-7115, storman5@bex.net
3rd Sqdn 3rd Plt A Co 1st Bde 30th Inf (Schweinfurt, Germany, 1960-1962), David Coronado, (956) 466-1200, davidcoronado77@yahoo.com
8th MP Co (Bad Kreuznach, Germany, 1960-1964), Leroy Imler, (703) 670-5719, limler@verizon.net
8th USAF 3rd Bomb Div 13th Cbt Bomb Wing 390th Bomb Grp, "Wittan's Wallpapers," B-17 Tail Code J, Jeff Keilen, (508) 384-0916
24th Eng C Co (Furth, Germany, 1961-1963), Lee Graham, (618) 259-6628, ggramz@sbcglobal.net

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68th Eng Co (Orleans, France & Neu-Ulm, Germany, 1966-1967), Jon King, (713) 553-5748, jon.king@mail.com

101st Abn Div 101st Admin Co, Jim Cheskawich, (360) 225-8402

178th Ord (Qui Nhon, Vietnam, 1965-1966), Gary Matthews, (402) 658-0466, gmat41347@aol.com

249th Eng Bn "Black Lion" (All Eras), Johnny McBee, (865) 687-7834, johnny.m.mcbee@gmail.com

414 Co (Great Lakes, IL, 1965), Gary Helm, (812) 988-0175

415 Co Boot Camp (Great Lakes, IL, 1948), Mike Schmitt, (217) 446-4625

629th Ord Supply Parts (Qui Nhon, Vietnam, 1965-1971), Gary Matthews, (712) 485-2422,

gmatt41347@aol.com

813th Eng Avn Bn & 925th Eng Avn Grp (Elmendorf, AK, 1953-1955), Vernon Johnston, (425) 220-5070, vcmjohn@frontier.com

3700/3701 Food Serv Sqdn (Lackland AFB, TX, 1963-1965), Gene Ludlow, (315) 649-2097, locallyoke12u@tds.net

Boot Camp Co 59-566 (San Diego, 1959-1960), John Prax, jjprax@valornet.com

C Co 1st Bn 47th Mech inf (Fort Wainwright, AK, 1967-1968), Larry Williams, (912) 684-3673, dorseywilliams@hotmail.com

HQ & HQ Co 8353 Army Arctic Ctr (Big Delta/ Fort Greely, AK, 1954-1956), Tom Mlinar, (414) 762-6996, tmlinar@wi.rr.com

Plt 3072 (MCRD San Diego, 1972), Arnold Salazar, (361) 790-8778, janieraz1957@yahoo.com

Survivors of Bay of Pigs (1961), Eddie Shepherd, (904) 261-0236

TAPS

David G. Sanborn, Dept. of Maine. Nat'l & Homeland Sec. Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1996-1998, Nat'l Veterans Preference Cmte. Memb. 1999-2000, and Nat'l Veterans Affairs & Rehab. Cmsn. Memb. 2000-2010.

Joseph Steen, Dept. of Massachusetts. Dept. Cmdr. 1996-1997, Nat'l Distinguished Guests Cmte. Vice Chmn. 1990-1996, Nat'l Legis. Cncl. Memb. 1999-2000 and 2001-2010, Nat'l Americanism Cncl. Vice Chmn. 2000-2004, Nat'l Sgt-At-Arms 2006-2007, and Nat'l Constitution & By-Laws Cmte. Memb. 2004-2006 and 2007-2010.

Terry Troutman, Dept. of Wisconsin. Dept. Cmdr. 2002-2003, Nat'l Foreign Relations Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1999-2006, and Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Alt. Memb. 2004-2006.

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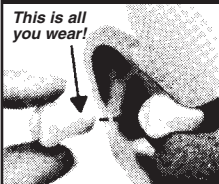
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"He smoked in the mixing room?" the investigator asked in horror. "How long had he been with the company?"

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"Twenty years, and he goes and strikes a match in the mixing room. I'd have thought that would have been the last thing he would do."

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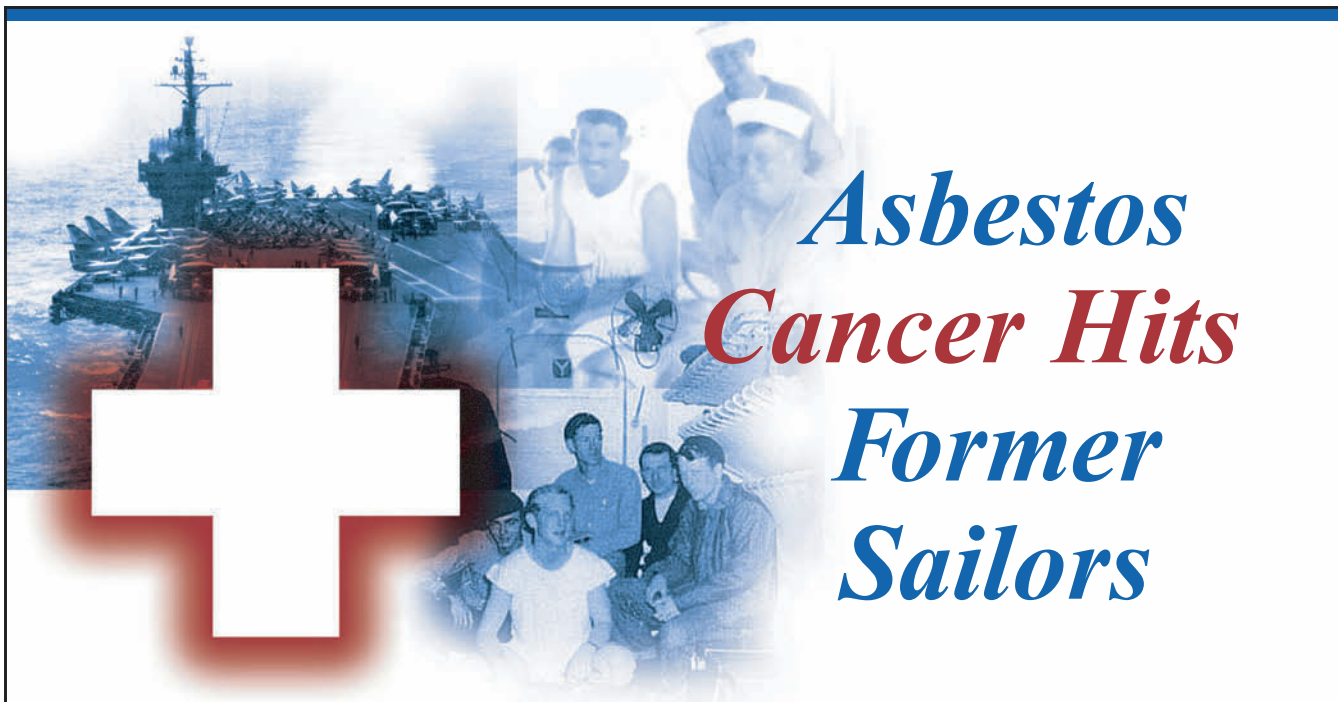
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